

GENESIS

GUIDELINES FOR BIBLE STUDY

Introduction

Is The Bible Important?

The Bible is probably the most maligned Book that ever has been written. It has been attacked as no other book has ever been attacked. Yet it has ministered and does minister to literally millions of people around the globe, and it has been doing this now for several thousand years. A Book of this nature and with this tremendous impact upon the human family certainly deserves the intelligent consideration of men and women.

Sir Walter Scott, on his deathbed, asked Lockhart to read to him. Puzzled, as he scanned the shelf of books that Walter Scott had written, he asked, "What book shall I read?" And Sir Walter replied, "Why do you ask that question? There is but one book; bring the Bible." There is only one Book for any man who is dying, but it is also the Book for any man who is living. A great many folk do not get interested in the Bible until they get to the end of their lives or until they get into a great deal of difficulty. While it is wonderful to have a Book in which you can find comfort in a time like that, it is also a Book for you to live -- in the full vigor of life. It is a Book to face life with today, and it's the Book which furnishes the only sure route through this world and on into the next world. It is the only Book that can enable us to meet the emergencies and cushion the shocks that come to us in life. The Bible is different from any other book.

That this Book has influenced great men who in turn have influenced the world is evident. Let me share with you some quotations.

There was an African prince who came to England and was presented to Her Majesty Queen Victoria. This prince asked a very significant question, "What is the secret of England's greatness?" The queen got a beautifully bound copy of the Bible and presented it to the prince with this statement. "This is the secret of England's greatness." I wonder if England's decline to a second-rate and then third-rate nation may be tied up in the fact that England has gotten away from the Word of God.

Prime Minister Gladstone, probably one of the greatest legal minds Britain ever produced, said, "Talk about the questions of the day! There is but one question, and that is the Gospel. That can and will correct everything. I am glad to say that about all the men at the top in Great Britain are Christians . . . I have been in public position fifty-eight years, all but eleven of them in the cabinet of the British government, and during those forty-seven years have been associated with sixty of the master minds of the century, and all but five of the sixty were Christians." I personally think that part of the problems we are having in the world today is that we have too few Christians at the top, too few who are acquainted with the Word of God.

Michael Faraday, perhaps the greatest scientist of the early 1800s, said, "But why will people go astray, when they have this blessed book of God to guide them?" Sir Isaac

Newton, a scientist in the preceding century, said, "If the Bible is true, the time is coming when men shall travel at fifty miles an hour." And Voltaire, the French skeptic, commented, "Poor Isaac. He was in his dotage when he made that prophecy. It only shows what Bible study will do to an otherwise scientific mind."

It might be interesting to note what some of our early presidents had to say about the Bible. John Adams, our second president, said, "I have examined all that is, all of Scripture as well as my narrow sphere, my straightened means, and my busy life will allow me, and the result is that the Bible is the best book in the world. It contains more of my little philosophy than all the libraries I have seen, and such parts of it I cannot reconcile to my little philosophy I postpone for further investigation." President John Quincy Adams said, "I speak as a man of the world to men of the world; and I say to you: Search the Scriptures. The Bible is the book above all others to be read at all ages and in all conditions of human life; not to be read once or twice through then laid aside, but to be read in small portions every day." And the presidents back in those days, who made our nation great, did not get us into foreign wars and were able to solve the problems of the streets. Someone may counter, "But the problems weren't as complicated then as they are now." They were for that day, friend. Not only England but also the United States has gotten away from the Word of God. And the farther we get, the more complicated our problems become. Right now there are men in positions of authority in this land who are saying that there is no solution to our problems. That is the reason I am teaching the Word of God in its entirety -- I believe it is the only solution. And, frankly, friend, we had better get back to it.

Another president, Thomas Jefferson, said, "I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better husbands, and better fathers." This is something to think over today when our citizens are burning down the cities in which they live and when divorce is running rife.

Daniel Webster made this statement: "If there be anything in my style or thoughts to be commended, the credit is due to my kind parents for instilling into my mind an early love of the Scriptures." What about you today, Christian parent? Are you making a Daniel Webster in your home or a little rebel? Webster also made this statement: "I have read it the Bible through many times. I now make a practice of going through it once a year. It is the Book of all others for lawyers as well as divines. I pity the man who cannot find in it a rich supply of thought and rules for conduct."

Born in the East and clothed in Oriental form and imagery, the Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet, and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It has learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. It comes into the palace to tell the monarch that he is a servant of the Most High, and into the cottage to assure the peasant that he is a son of God. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men ponder them as parables of life. It has a word of peace for the time of peril, a word of comfort for the time of calamity, a word of light for the hour of darkness. Its oracles are repeated in the assembly of the people, and its counsels whispered in the ear of the lonely. The wicked and the proud tremble at its warnings, but to the wounded and the penitent it has a mother's voice. The wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad by it, and the fire on the hearth has lit the reading of its well-

worn pages. It has woven itself into our dearest dreams; so that love, friendship, sympathy and devotion, memory and hope put on the beautiful garments of its treasured speech, breathing of frankincense and myrrh.

-- Henry van Dyke

In What Way Is The Bible Unique?

In many ways the Bible is a most unusual Book. For instance, it has a dual authorship. In other words, God is the Author of the Bible, and in another sense man is the author of the Bible. Actually, the Bible was written by about forty authors over a period of approximately fifteen hundred years. Some of these men never even heard of the others, and there was no collusion among the forty. Two or three of them could have gotten together, but the others could not have known each other. And yet they have presented a Book that has the most marvelous continuity of any book that has ever been written. Also, it is without error. Each author expressed his own feelings in his own generation. Each has his limitations, and made his mistakes -- poor old Moses made mistakes, but when he was writing the Pentateuch, somehow or other no mistakes got in there. You see, it is a human Book and yet it is a God-Book.

It is a very human Book, written by men from all walks of life, prince and pauper, the highly intellectual and the very simple. For example, Dr. Luke writes almost classical Greek in a period when the Koine Greek was popular. His Greek is marvelous! But Simon Peter, the fisherman, wrote some Greek also. He is not so good, but God the Holy Spirit used both of these men. He let them express exactly their thoughts, their feelings, and yet through that method the Spirit of God was able to overrule in such a way that God said exactly what He wanted to say. That's the wonder of the Book, the Bible.

It is a God-Book. In the Bible God says twenty-five hundred times, "God said . . . the Lord has said . . . thus saith the Lord," and so on. God has made it very clear that He is speaking through this Book. It is a Book that can communicate life to you. You can even become a child of God, begotten "not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible, by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever." It is God's communication to man. And if God spoke out of heaven right now, He would just repeat Himself because He has said all that He wants to say to this generation. And, by the way, He didn't learn anything when He read the morning paper. When man went to the moon, he didn't discover anything that God didn't already know when He gave us the Bible. He is the same God who created this universe that we are in today.

The Bible is both divine and human. In a way it is like my Lord who walked down here and grew weary and sat down at a well. Although He was God, He was man. He talked with people down here and communicated with them. This is a Book that communicates. It speaks to mankind today. The Bible is for men as they are.

The Bible is a corridor between two eternities down which walks the Christ of God; his invisible steps echo through the Old Testament, but we meet Him face to face in the throne room of the New; and it is through that Christ alone, crucified for me, that I have found forgiveness for sins and life eternal. The Old Testament is summed up in the word

Christ; the New Testament is summed up in the word Jesus; and the summary of the whole Bible is that Jesus is the Christ.

-- Bishop Pollock

How Do You Know The Bible Is From God?

This is a good question, and it should be asked and answered.

1. Preservation -- One of the objective proofs, one of the external proofs, has been the marvelous preservation of the Bible. There was a king of old -- we read about him in Jeremiah -- who, when the Word was sent to him, took a penknife and cut it to pieces. But it was rewritten, and we have that Word today. Down through the centuries there have been a great many Bible burnings. Today there's a great deal of antagonism toward the Bible. In our country today it is not being burned because we think that we are too civilized for such behavior. The way enemies of God's Word try to get rid of it is just to outlaw it in our schools and in many other places. (Yet we talk about our freedom of religion and freedom of speech.) In spite of all the attacks that have been made upon the Bible, it still today exists -- and, of course, it's one of the best-sellers. For many years it was the best-seller, but it's not today. I regret to have to say that, but it is true. And that is certainly a commentary on our contemporary society. It reveals that the Bible is not really occupying the place that it once did in the history and in the life of of this nation. Yet, I think the amazing preservation of the Word of God is worthy of consideration.

2. Archaeology -- Another way in which we know the Bible is the Word of God is through archaeology. The spade of the archaeologist has turned up many things that have proven that this Book is the Word of God. For instance, critics for many years denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch on the basis that writing was not in existence in Moses' day. You haven't heard anybody advance that theory recently, have you? Well, of course not. For years the spade of the archaeologist has turned up again and again evidence of the validity of the Bible. The city of Jericho and the walls that fell down are one example. Now there has been some argument between Miss Kathleen Kenyon and Sir Charles Marsdon relative to specifics, but it's well established that the walls fell down, and I'll let them debate about the time and all that sort of thing. The Word of God has been substantiated there, and in many other ways archaeology has demonstrated the accuracy of the Bible. Many of the manuscripts that have been found do that also. It's quite interesting that when the Isaiah Scrolls, the Dead Sea Scrolls, were found, the liberal leaped at that because he thought he had found an argument that would discredit the Bible. However, the scrolls have not discredited the Bible, and it seems that the liberal has lost a great deal of interest in them. This is a field into which you might do some research, as I cannot go to any great length in this brief study.

3. Fulfilled Prophecy -- If I were asked today whether I had just one thing to suggest as a conclusive proof that the Bible is the Word of God, do you know what I would suggest? I would suggest fulfilled prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy is the one proof that you can't escape, you can't get around. And the Bible is full of fulfilled prophecy. One-fourth of Scripture, when it was written, was prophetic; that is, it announced things that were to take place in the future. A great deal of that -- in fact, a great deal more than people imagine -- has already been fulfilled. We could turn to many places where prophecy has

been fulfilled exactly. We find that there were many local situations that were fulfilled even in the day of the prophet. For example, Micaiah was the prophet who told Ahab that if he went out to battle as he planned, he would lose the battle and would be killed. However, Ahab's false prophets had told him he'd have a victory and would return as a victorious king. Because he didn't like what Micaiah said, Ahab ordered him locked up and fed bread and water, and said he would take care of him when he got back. But Micaiah shot back the last word, "If you come back at all, the Lord hasn't spoken by me." Well, evidently the Lord had spoken by him because Ahab didn't come back. He was killed in the battle, and his army was defeated. He had even disguised himself so that there would be no danger of his losing his life. But an enemy soldier, the Scripture says, pulled his bow at a venture; that is, when the battle was about over, he had just one arrow left in his quiver; he put it in place and shot, not really aiming at anything. But, you know, that arrow must have had Ahab's name on it, and it found him. It went right to its mark. Why? Because Micaiah had made an accurate prophecy ([1Kings 22](#)).

On another occasion, the prophet Isaiah said that the invading Assyrian army wouldn't shoot an arrow into the city of Jerusalem ([2Kings 19:32](#)). Well now, that's interesting. Micaiah's prophecy was fulfilled because a soldier shot an arrow by chance, pulled his bow at a venture. Wouldn't you think that among two hundred thousand soldiers -- that "great host" -- perhaps one might be trigger-happy and would pull his bow at a venture and let an arrow fly over the wall of Jerusalem? Well, he didn't. If the enemy had shot an arrow inside that city, they could be sure that Isaiah was not God's prophet. But he was, as was proven by this local fulfillment of his prophecy. But Isaiah also said a virgin would bring forth a child, and that was seven hundred years before it was literally fulfilled. And then, if you want a final proof, there were over three hundred prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ which were all literally fulfilled. As Jesus Christ was hanging there on the Cross and dying, there was one prophecy recorded in the Old Testament that had not been fulfilled. It was, "They gave me vinegar to drink" ([Ps. 69:21](#)). Jesus said, "I thirst," and the enemy himself went and fulfilled prophecy ([John 19:28-30](#)). It's a most amazing thing. Men can't guess like that.

It has been rather amusing to watch the weatherman. During the summer season in Southern California he does fine, but when we get to the change of seasons -- well, your guess is as good as his. In the nation Israel, a prophet had to be accurate. If he was not accurate, he was to be put to death as a false prophet. God told His people that they would be able to distinguish a false prophet from a true prophet. A true prophet must first speak to a local situation, which Isaiah did. When that prophecy came to pass, they would know they could trust him to speak concerning the future, as Isaiah did. We can look back now and know that it was fulfilled.

There are so many other prophecies. Tyre and Sidon are over there today exactly as God's Word said twenty-five hundred years ago they would be. Egypt today is in the exact position God said it would be in. All of these are amazing, friend, and fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest proofs that the Bible is indeed the Word of God. You see, men just can't be that accurate. Men can't guess like that -- even the weatherman misses it.

Let me show you that, according to mathematical law of problematical conjecture, man could never, never prophesy. Suppose that right now I would make a prophecy. Just by

way of illustration, suppose I'd say that wherever you are it's going to rain tomorrow. I'd have a 50 percent chance of being right because it'll do one of the two. But suppose that I add to that and say it would start raining tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. That would be another uncertain element. I had a fifty-fifty chance of being right at first; now I have perhaps a 25 percent chance. Every uncertain element that is added reduces by at least 50 percent the chance of my being right -- the law of problematical conjecture. Now suppose that I not only say that it's going to start raining at nine o'clock, but I also say it'll stop raining at two o'clock. That has reduced my chances now another 50 percent, which brings it down to 12 1/2 percent. Can you imagine my chance of being right now? But suppose I add three hundred uncertain elements. There's not a ghost of a chance of my being accurate. I just couldn't hit it -- it would be impossible. Yet the Word of God hit it, my friend. It is accurate. The Bible has moved into that area of absolute impossibility, and that to me is absolute proof that it is the Word of God. There is nothing to compare to it at all. I have given very few examples of fulfilled prophecy, but there is in the Word of God prophecy after prophecy, and they have been fulfilled -- literally fulfilled. And by the way, I would think that that indicates the method in which prophecy for the future is yet to be fulfilled.

4. Transformed Lives -- I offer two final reasons as proof that the Bible is the Word of God. One is the transformed lives of believers today. I have seen what the Word of God can do in the lives of men and women. I'm thinking right now of a man in Oakland, California, who listened to my Bible-teaching program. He probably had as many problems, as many hang-ups, and he was in as much sin as any man that I know anything about. And this man began to listen to the radio program. I know of people who just hear the gospel once and are converted. I think it's possible and that it's wonderful. But this man listened to it week after week, and he became antagonistic. He became angry. Later he said to me, "If I could have gotten to you when you were teaching the Epistle to the Romans and you told me that I was a sinner, I would have hit you in the nose," and frankly, I think he could have done it. He's much bigger and much younger than I am. I'm glad he couldn't get to me. Finally, this man turned to Christ. It has been wonderful to see what God has done in his life. Again and again and again this testimony could be multiplied. Young and old have found purpose and fulfillment in life, marriages have been saved, families reunited, individuals have been freed from alcoholism and drug addiction. Folk have had their lives transformed by coming to Christ.

When I finished seminary, I was a preacher who majored in the realm of the defense of the gospel, and I attempted to defend the Bible. In fact, I think every message I gave entered into that area. I felt if I could just get enough answers to the questions that people raise for not believing the Bible, they would believe. But I found out that the worst thing I could do was to whip a man down intellectually. The minute I did that, I made an enemy and never could win him for the Lord. So I moved out of the realm of apologetics and into another area of just giving out the Word of God as simply as I could. Only the Bible can turn a sinner into a saint.

5. Spirit of God Made It Real -- Another reason that I've moved out of the realm of apologetics is because there has been a certain development in my own life. I have reached the place today where I not only believe that the Bible is the Word of God, I know it's the Word of God. I know it's the Word of God because the Spirit of God has

made it real to my own heart and my own life. That is the thing that Paul talked to the Colossians about. He prayed that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." I also want this, because I found that the Spirit of God can confirm these things to your heart and you don't need archaeology or anything else to prove that the Bible is God's Word.

A young preacher said to me some time ago, "Dr. McGee, isn't it wonderful that they have discovered this?" He mentioned a recent discovery in particular.

And I said, "Well, I don't see anything to be excited about."

He was greatly disappointed and even chagrined that I did not respond enthusiastically. "Why, what do you mean?" he asked. "Is it possible that this hasn't impressed you?"

I answered him this way, "I already knew it was the Word of God long before the spade of the archaeologist turned that up." He asked how I knew it, and I said, "The Spirit of God has been making it real to my own heart."

I trust that the Spirit of God is going to make the Word of God not only real to you, to incorporate it into your living, but that He is also going to give you that assurance that you can say, "I know that it's the Word of God."

Whence but from Heaven, could men unskilled in arts,
In several ages born, in several parts,
Weave such agreeing truths, or how, or why,
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,
Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.
-- Dryden

What Is Revelation? Inspiration? Illumination? Interpretation?

Revelation means that God has spoken and that God has communicated to man. Inspiration guarantees the revelation of God. Illumination has to do with the Spirit of God being the Teacher -- He communicates. Interpretation has to do with the interpretation that you and I give to the Word of God.

Revelation

Revelation means that God has spoken. "Thus saith the Lord," and its equivalent, occurs over twenty-five hundred times. The Lord didn't want you to misunderstand that He had spoken. Notice [Hebrews 1:1-2](#): "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

Wherever you will find two persons, endowed with a reasonable degree of intelligence, who harbor the same feelings and desires, who are attracted to each other more or less, you will find communication between them. Persons of like propensities, separated from each other, delight in getting in touch with each other and rejoice in receiving communication from each other. This innate characteristic of the human heart explains the post office department, the telephone, and the telegraph. Friends communicate with friends. A husband away from home writes to his wife. A boy or girl at school will write home to dad and mom. And ever and anon there travels the scented epistle of a girl to a

boy, and then the boy returns an epistle to the girl. All of this is called communication. It is the expression of the heart. I remember the thrill that came to me when I read the account of Helen Keller, shut out from the world by blindness and deafness, without means of communication; and then a way was opened up so she could communicate -- probably better than many of us who can see and hear.

Now, on the basis of all this, I would like to ask you what I believe is a reasonable and certainly an intelligent question: Isn't it reasonable to conclude that God has communicated with His creatures to whom He has committed a certain degree of intelligence and whom He created in His likeness? If we did not have a revelation from God, right now I think that you and I could just wait and He would be speaking to us, because we could expect God to speak to us. You will notice that the writer to the Hebrews says that God in the Old Testament spoke through the prophets, and He now has spoken through Christ. Both the revelation to the prophets in the Old Testament and the revelation of Christ in the New Testament are in the Word of God, of course, and that is the only way we would know about the communication from either one. The Bible has sixty-six books, and God has spoken to us through each one of them.

This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's character. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good is its design and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is given you in life and will be opened in the judgment and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labour, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

-- Author Unknown

Inspiration

This brings us to the second great subject, which is inspiration. I personally believe in what is known as the plenary verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, which means that the Bible is an authoritative statement and that every word of it is the Word of God to us and for us in this day in which we live. Inspiration guarantees the revelation of God. And that is exactly what this Book says. Two men -- Paul writing his last epistle to Timothy and Peter writing his last epistle -- had something pretty definite to say about the Bible: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" ([2Tim. 3:16-17](#), New Scofield Reference Bible). Notice that all Scripture is given by inspiration. The word inspiration means "God breathed." God said through these men, as He said here through Paul, exactly what He wanted to say. He hasn't anything else to add. Peter expresses it this way: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" ([2Pet. 1:21](#)). It is very important to see that these men

were moved, as it were, carried along, by the Holy Spirit of God. It was Bishop Westcott who said, "The thoughts are wedded to words as necessarily as the soul is to the body." And Dr. Keiper said, "You can as easily have music without notes, or mathematics without figures, as thoughts without words." It is not the thoughts that are inspired; it's the words that are inspired.

There is a little whimsical story of a girl who had taken singing lessons from a very famous teacher. He was present at her recital, and after it was over she was anxious to know his reaction. He didn't come to congratulate her, and she asked a friend, "What did he say?"

Her loyal friend answered, "He said that you sang heavenly."
She couldn't quite believe that her teacher had said that; so she probed,
"Is that exactly what he said?"
"Well, no, but that is what he meant."
The girl insisted, "Tell me the exact words that he used."
"Well, his exact words were, 'That was an unearthly noise!'"

Obviously, there is a difference between an unearthly noise and a heavenly sound. Exact words are important.

Believe me, the words of Scripture are inspired -- not just the thoughts, but the words. For instance, Satan was not inspired to tell a lie, but the Bible records that he told a lie. It's the words that are inspired. And the Lord Jesus often said, "It is written," quoting the Word of God in the Old Testament -- the men who wrote gave out what God had to say. In [Exodus 20:1](#) Moses wrote: "And God spake all these words, saying . . ." It was God who did the speaking, and Moses wrote what He said.

Over the years there have been discovered many very excellent manuscripts of the Scriptures. Speaking of the manuscripts in Britain, Sir George Kenyon, the late director and principal librarian of the British Museum, made this statement: "Thanks to these manuscripts, the ordinary reader of the Bible may feel comfortable about the soundness of the text. Apart from a few unimportant verbal alterations, natural in books transcribed by hand, the New Testament, we now feel assured, has come down intact." We can be sure today that we have that which is as close to the autographs (the original manuscripts) as anything possibly can be, and I believe in verbal plenary inspiration of the autographs.

In the second century Irenaeus, one of the church fathers, wrote: "The Scriptures indeed are perfect, forasmuch as they are spoken by the Word of God and by His Spirit." Augustine, living in the fifth century, made this statement, "Let us therefore yield ourselves and bow to the authority of the Holy Scriptures which can neither err nor deceive." And Spurgeon commented, "I can never doubt the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration; since I so constantly see, in actual practice, how the very words that God has been pleased to use -- a plural instead of a singular -- are blessed to the souls of men." God speaks in this Book to our hearts and to our lives.

Illumination

Illumination means that since you and I have a Book, a God-Book and a human Book, written by men who were expressing their thoughts and at the same time writing down

the Word of God, only the Spirit of God can teach it to us. Although we can get the facts of the Bible on our own, the Spirit of God will have to open our minds and hearts if we are to understand the spiritual truth that is there.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" ([1Cor. 2:7-9](#)). Now you and I get most of what we know through the eye gate and the ear gate or by reason. Paul tells us here that there are certain things that eye has not seen nor ear heard, certain things that you can't get into your mind at all. Then how in the world are you going to get them? "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" ([1Cor. 2:10](#)). [Verse 9](#) sometimes goes to a funeral. The minister implies that the one who has died didn't know too much down here, but now he will know things he did not know before. While that probably is true (we will get quite an education in heaven), that is not what the verse literally says. Long before you get to the undertaker, there are a lot of things in this life that you and I can't learn through natural means. The Holy Spirit has to be our Teacher.

Remember that our Lord inquired of His disciples, "What are men saying about Me?" They said that some were saying one thing and some another. (And today you can get a different answer from almost every person you happen to ask. There are many viewpoints of Him.) Then He asked His disciples, ". . . But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" ([Matt. 16:15-17](#)). God is the One who revealed the truth to Simon Peter. And today only God can open up the Word of God for us to really understand it.

On the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, He walked down the Emmaus road and joined a couple of men as they walked along. Entering into their conversation, He asked them, ". . . What manner of communications are these that ye had one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him" ([Luke 24:17-20](#)). As you will recall, Jesus had predicted that. And it is interesting to see that written prophecy had been saying it for years. Then they expressed the hope that had been theirs: "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done" ([Luke 24:21](#)). And they went on to tell about what they knew and what the women had reported: those who "were with us went to the sepulchre . . . but him they saw not" ([Luke 24:24](#)). Their hopes had dimmed, and darkness had entered their hearts. Now listen to the Lord Jesus, ". . . O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all

the scriptures the things concerning himself" ([Luke 24:25-27](#)). Wouldn't you have loved to have been there that day and heard Him go back in the Old Testament and lift out the Scriptures concerning Himself? And after He finally made Himself known to them as they sat at the evening meal, this was their comment, ". . . Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" ([Luke 24:32](#)).

You see, we are studying a Book that is different from any other book. I not only believe in the inspiration of the Bible, I believe that it is a closed Book to you unless the Spirit of God will open your heart and make it real. When Jesus returned to Jerusalem at that time, He continued teaching the disciples: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" ([Luke 24:44](#)). Notice that He believed Moses wrote the Pentateuch; He believed the prophets spoke of Him and that the Psalms pointed to Him. Now here is the important verse: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" ([Luke 24:45](#)). And, friend, if He doesn't open your understanding, you're just not going to get it. That is the reason we ought to approach this Book with great humility of mind, regardless of how high our I.Q. is or the extent of our education.

Referring back to 1 Corinthians, Paul goes on to say, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" ([1Cor. 2:13-14](#), New Scofield Reference Bible). I am never disturbed when one of these unbelievers, even if he's a preacher, comes along and says he no longer believes the Bible is the Word of God; that's the way he should talk. After all, if he is not a believer, he cannot understand it. Mark Twain, who was no believer, said that he was not disturbed by what he did not understand in the Bible; what worried him were the things he did understand. There are things an unbeliever can understand, and it's those things which cause many to reject the Word of God. It was Pascal who said, "Human knowledge must be understood to be loved, but Divine knowledge must be loved to be understood."

As I leave the subject of illumination, let me add this: Only the Spirit of God can open your mind and heart to see and to accept Christ and to trust Him as your Savior. How wonderful! I have always felt as I entered the pulpit how helpless I am; believe me, Vernon McGee can't convert anyone. But I not only feel weak, I also feel mighty -- not mighty in myself, but in the knowledge that the Spirit of God can take my dead words and make them real and living.

Interpretation

Interpretation has to do with the interpretation that you and I give to the Word of God. And this is the reason there are Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians, this kind of teacher and that kind of teacher -- we all have our interpretations. And where there is disagreement, somebody is evidently wrong.

There are several rules that should be followed as we attempt to interpret the Bible.

1. The overall purpose of the Bible should first be considered. And that is the reason I teach all of it -- because I believe you need to have it all before you can come to any dogmatic conclusion concerning any particular verse of Scripture. It is important to take into consideration all verses that are related to that subject.
2. To whom the Scripture is addressed should next be considered. For instance, way back yonder God said to Joshua, "Arise, go over this Jordan" ([Josh. 1:2](#)). When I was over in that land, I crossed the Jordan River, but I didn't cross it to fulfill that Scripture. And I didn't say, "At last I've obeyed the Lord and have crossed over Jordan." No. When I read that verse I know the Lord is talking to Joshua -- but I believe there is a tremendous lesson there for me. All Scripture is not to me, but all Scripture is for me. That is a good rule to keep in mind.
3. The immediate context before and after a Scripture should be observed. What is the passage talking about? And what other passages of Scripture deal with the same thing?
4. Discover what the original says. If you do not read Hebrew or Greek, when you read the American Standard Version you're right close to what the Lord said. Frankly, I cannot recommend the modern translations, although there are good things in them. I have found that because we are so divided doctrinally, every group that attempts to translate the Bible just naturally injects into their translation their particular viewpoint. Therefore, if the liberal is going to do the translating, you may get a taste of liberalism. If the fundamentalist is going to do the translating, you'll get his bias in certain places. However, the men who did the original English translations were men who believed that the Bible was the Word of God and handled it accordingly. When there were words they could not translate, they simply transliterated them (for instance, Abba and baptizo). The danger in modern translations is that translation is done in a dogmatic fashion. A translator must take something out of one language and put it into another language in comparable terms -- identical terms if possible. Most of our modern translators are trying to get it into modern speech. And in doing so, they really miss what the original is saying. Personally, I stick by the Authorized (King James) Version. I feel that The New Scofield Reference Bible has made a tremendous step forward in making certain distinctions and corrections that needed to be made in the Authorized Version. I recommend that also, although I still use my old Scofield Reference Bible. I know my way around through the Book, and the old scout will follow the old trail. However, the important thing is to attempt to determine the exact words of the original.
5. Interpret the Bible literally. The late Dr. David Cooper has stated it well: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

Guidelines

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" [Ps. 119:18](#).

There are certain guidelines that each of us should follow relative to the Word of God. I guarantee that if you will follow these guidelines, blessing will come to your heart and

life. Certainly there should be these directions in the study of Scripture. Today a bottle of medicine, no matter how simple it might be, has directions for the use of it. And any little gadget that you buy in a five-and-ten-cent store has with it directions for its operation. If that is true of the things of this world, certainly the all-important Word of God should have a few directions and instructions on the study of it. I want to mention seven very simple, yet basic, preliminary steps that will be a guide for the study of the Word of God.

1. Begin with prayer.
2. Read the Bible.
3. Study the Bible.
4. Meditate on the Bible.
5. Read what others have written on the Bible.
6. Obey the Bible.
7. Pass it on to others.

You may want to add to these, but I believe these are basic and primary. Someone has put it in a very brief, cogent manner: "The Bible -- know it in your head; stow it in your heart; show it in your life; sow it in the world." That is another way of saying some of the things we are going to present here.

1. Begin with Prayer.

As we saw when we dealt with the subject of illumination, the Bible differs from other books in that the Holy Spirit alone can open our minds to understand it. You can take up a book on philosophy, and if a man wrote it (and he did), then a man can understand it. The same is true of higher mathematics or any other subject. There is not a book that ever has been written by any man that another man cannot understand. But the Bible is different. The Bible cannot be understood unless the Holy Spirit is the instructor. And He wants to teach us. The fact of the matter is, our Lord told us, ". . . He will guide you into all truth" ([John 16:13](#)). When we open the Word of God we need to begin with the psalmist's prayer: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" ([Ps. 119:18](#)). When the psalmist wrote these lines, he had in mind the Mosaic system, of course; but we widen that out to include the sixty-six books of the Bible and pray today, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Word."

When the apostle Paul was praying for the Ephesians, he did not pray for their health (although he may have at another time), and he did not pray that they might get wealthy (I don't know that he ever did that), but Paul's first prayer for these Ephesians is recorded in his little epistle to them: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" ([Eph. 1:15-16](#)). Now what would Paul pray for? Here it is: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" ([Eph. 1:17-18](#)). Paul's prayer, you see, is that they might have a wisdom and an understanding of the revelation of the knowledge of Him -- that is, that they might know the Word of God. And that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened, that they might know something of the hope of the calling they had in Christ. This is the prayer of the apostle Paul. And if anyone remembers me in prayer,

this is exactly what I want them to pray for -- that my eyes (my spiritual eyes) might be open. I believe the most important thing for you and me today is to know the will of God -- and the will of God is the Word of God. We cannot know the Word of God unless the Spirit of God is our teacher. That is what Paul says over in the first epistle to the Corinthians: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the word which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" ([1Cor. 2:12-14](#), New Scofield Reference Bible). The reason today that so many don't get anything out of the Bible is simply because they are not letting the Spirit of God teach them. The Word of God is different from any other book, you see, because the natural man cannot receive these things. To him they are foolishness. God has given to us the Spirit that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. He alone is our Teacher; He alone can take the Word of God and make it real and living to us.

God wants to communicate with us through His written Word. But it is a supernatural Book, and it will not communicate to us on the natural plane for the very simple reason that only the Spirit of God can take the things of Christ and reveal them to us. Notice this very interesting verse of Scripture: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" ([1Cor. 2:11](#), New Scofield Reference Bible). In a very succinct and understandable manner, this gives the reason the Spirit of God must be our Teacher. You and I understand each other, but we do not understand God. I believe it is perfect nonsense to talk about a generation gap through which we cannot communicate. While it has always been true that it is difficult for an older person and a younger person to see eye to eye, we can communicate with each other because we are all human beings. We understand each other. But frankly, I don't understand God unless He is revealed to me. I used to wonder how He would feel at a funeral. Well, I find the Lord Jesus there at the funeral of Lazarus and see that He wept. I know how He feels today. I know how He feels about many things because the Spirit of God through the Word of God has revealed them to me.

When I was pastor in Nashville, Tennessee, I got up one bright morning and looked out my window. During the night about five inches of snow had fallen and covered up all the ugliness with a beautiful blanket. I sat upstairs in my study looking out over the scene when I noticed an elder of my church, who lived next door, come out on his porch with two coal scuttles filled with ashes which he was going to empty in the alley. I saw him stop and look over the landscape, and I just smiled because I knew how he felt -- just like I felt, looking out on that snow that had fallen during the night. But when he started down the steps, he slipped. Not wanting to spill the ashes, he held them out and hit one of those steps with a real bump. I couldn't help but laugh. I guess if he had broken his neck I still would have laughed. But I noticed that he looked around, and when he was satisfied that nobody had seen him, he got up with great satisfaction and started out again. About halfway out on the sidewalk we had a repeat performance; only this time he fell much farther because he fell all the way to the sidewalk. And it looked to me like he bounced

when he hit. This time he really scanned the landscape. He didn't want anybody to see what he had done. And I knew how he felt. I would have felt the same way. He got up and looked over the landscape, went out and emptied his ashes, and when he got back to the porch, he looked over the landscape again -- I don't think this time to admire the scene but to make good and sure that no one had seen him fall. I didn't say a word until Sunday morning. When I came into the church, I went right by where he sat, leaned down and said, "You sure did look funny yesterday carrying out the ashes!"

He looked at me in amazement. He said, "Did you see me?"

I said, "Yes."

"Well," he said, "I didn't think anybody saw me."

And I said, "I thought that. I knew exactly how you felt." You see, he had a human spirit and I had a human spirit -- we understood each other. But who can understand God? Only the Spirit of God. And that is the reason the Holy Spirit teaches us, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Renan, the French skeptic, made an attack on the Word of God; yet he wrote Life of Jesus. His book is divided into two sections, one is the historical section, the other is the interpretation of the life of Christ. As far as the first part is concerned, there probably has never been a more brilliant life of Christ written by any man. But his interpretation of it is positively absurd. It could have been done better by a twelve-year-old Sunday school boy. What is the explanation of that? Well, the Spirit of God does not teach you history or give you facts that you can dig out for yourself; a very clever mind can dig out those. But the interpretation is altogether different. The Spirit of God has to do the interpreting, and He alone must be the Teacher to lead us and guide us into all truth. We must have the Spirit of God to open our eyes to see.

And we are told to ask His help. In [John 16](#) the Lord Jesus says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father" ([John 16:12-16](#)). So the Lord Jesus is saying that we are to ask. He has many things for us, and He has sent the Holy Spirit to be the Teacher. Again in chapter 14 He says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" ([John 14:26](#)). The Holy Spirit is the Teacher, and He must be the One to lead us and guide us into all truth, friend. If you ever learn anything through my Bible study program, it will not be because this poor preacher is the teacher, it will be because the Spirit of God is opening up the Word of God to you.

This, then, is the first guideline: Begin with prayer and ask the Spirit of God to be your Teacher.

2. Read the Bible.

The second guideline may seem oversimplified.

Someone asked a great Shakespearean scholar years ago, "How do you study Shakespeare?" His answer was very terse, "Read Shakespeare." And I would say to you: Read the Word of God. Do you want to know what the Bible has to say? Read the Bible. Over and above what any teacher may give you, it is all-important to read for yourself what the Bible has to say.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan has written some very wonderful and helpful commentaries on the Bible. In fact, he has a series of books that I recommend on all sixty-six books of the Bible. I know of nothing that is any better than them, and when I started out as a student, they had a great influence on my study of the Word. It is said that he would not put pen to paper until he had read a particular book of the Bible through fifty times. So don't be weary in well doing, friend; just read the Word of God. If you don't get it the first time, read it the second time. If you don't get it the second time, read it the third time. Keep on reading it. We are to get the facts of the Word of God.

There is a very interesting incident in the Book of Nehemiah: "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law" ([Neh. 8:1-3](#)). This is a very remarkable passage of Scripture. You see, the Jews had been in Babylonian captivity seventy years; many of them had never heard the Word of God. It did not circulate much in that day. There were not a hundred different translations abroad nor new ones coming off the press all the time. Probably there were just one or two copies in existence, and Ezra had one of those copies. He stood and read before the water gate. "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" ([Neh. 8:8](#)). From the way the account is given, I assume that men of the tribe of Levi were stationed in certain areas among the people. After Ezra had read a certain portion, he would stop to give the people who had listened an opportunity to ask questions of the men who were stationed out there to explain the Bible to them. ". . . and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place" ([Neh. 8:7](#)). Not only did they read the Word, but they caused the people to understand it.

We need to read the Bible.

There are so many distractions today from the study of the Word of God. And the greatest distraction we have is the church. The church is made up of committees and organizations and banquets and entertainments and promotional schemes to the extent that the Word of God is not even dealt with in many churches today. There are churches that have disbanded the preaching service altogether. Instead they have a time in which the people will be able to express themselves and say what they are thinking. I can't

imagine anything more puerile or more of a waste of time than that (although it is a fine excuse to get out of preaching for a lazy preacher who will not read or study the Bible.) I find that the people who are more ignorant of the Bible than anyone else are church members. They simply do not know the Word of God. And it has been years since it has been taught in the average church. We need to read the Bible. We need to get into the Word of God -- not just reading a few favorite verses, but reading the entire Word of God. That is the only way we are going to know it, friend. That is God's method.

WHEN YOU READ THE BIBLE THROUGH

Twelfth of Romans, First of Proverbs --
I supposed I knew my Bible,
Reading piecemeal, hit or miss,
Now a bit of John or Matthew,
Now a snatch of Genesis,
Certain chapters of Isaiah,
Certain Psalms (the twenty-third),
Twelfth of Romans, First of Proverbs --
Yes, I thought I knew the Word!
But I found that thorough reading
Was a different thing to do,
And the way was unfamiliar
When I read the Bible through.
You who like to play at Bible,
Dip and dabble, here and there,
Just before you kneel, aweary,
And yawn through a hurried prayer;
You who treat the Crown of Writings
As you treat no other book --
Just a paragraph disjointed,
Just a crude impatient look --
Try a worthier procedure,
Try a broad and steady view;
You will kneel in very rapture
When you read the Bible through!
-- Amos R. Wells

3. Study the Bible.

Someone came to Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, years ago, and said, "You speak as though you are inspired!" Dr. Morgan replied, "Inspiration is 95 percent perspiration." The Bible needs to be studied. We need to realize that the Spirit of God will not teach us something that we could get ourselves by study. I used to teach in a Bible institute, and the classes were made up of all kinds of young folk. Among them were a few very pious individuals, and I understood these young people very well after a period of time -- I confess I didn't understand them at first. Their pious facade, I found, covered up tremendous ignorance and a vacuum relative to the Word of God. Some of them would not study the night before an exam. They always would give an excuse that they were busy in a prayer meeting or a service somewhere. I had the feeling that some of them believed that they could put their Bibles under their pillows at night and as they slept, the names of the kings of Israel and Judah would come up through the duck feathers! Believe me, it won't come up through the duck feathers. We have to knuckle down and study the Word of

God. A fellow student in a Bible class when I was in college said, "Doctor, you have assigned us a section that is very dry." The professor, without even missing a step, said to him, "Then dampen it a little with sweat from your brow." The Bible should be studied, and it is very important we see that. There is a certain knowledge that the Spirit of God is not going to give you. I do not think He is revealing truth to lazy people. After all, you never learn logarithms or geometry or Greek by just reading a chapter of it just before you go to sleep at night!

Now you may be shocked when I say that I do not encourage devotional reading of the Bible. But over a period of years I have learned that a great many people who are very faithful in what they call devotional reading are very ignorant of the Bible. I stayed with a family for over a week when I was holding meetings in a place in middle Tennessee. Every morning at the breakfast table we had devotions. Unfortunately, breakfast was always a little late, and Susie and Willie were rushing to get away to school. I am confident that they didn't even know what was read. Dad was wanting to get away to work, and he generally made the Bible reading very brief. Always he'd say, "Well, I'll read this familiar passage this morning because we don't have much time." And, believe me, we didn't. By the time the reading was over, Susie and Willie left the table like they were shot out of a gun, Dad got out of there almost as quickly as they did, and Mother was left with the dishes -- and I wondered if she had really heard what had been read. I determined right there and then that in my home we wouldn't have devotional reading. I have always encouraged members of my family to read the Bible on their own. That is the reading that is profitable.

Someone is going to say, "But I have my devotions at night after the day is over." Now really, don't you have them right before you go to bed? You've got one foot in bed already, one eye is already closed, and you turn to a passage of Scripture to read. You cannot learn mathematics that way. You cannot learn literature that way. And you cannot learn the Bible that way. You have to study the Word of God. You ought to read it when you can give time to it. And if you can't find time, you ought to make time. Set apart thirty minutes or an hour. Or if you do things haphazardly like I do, read thirty minutes one day, perhaps only five minutes the next day, and two or three hours the next day, however it fits into your program. I put down no particular rule except that each person should read for himself, and boys and girls should be encouraged to read the Bible for themselves. Some folk feel that they ought to have devotional reading together. And that is fine, if the Lord leads you to do it, but I guarantee you will not be intelligent Bible students after twenty years of doing it like that. You also need to study the Word of God on your own.

It was said of John Wesley that he was a man of one Book. What made him a man of one Book? Well, he got up and read the Bible at four and five o'clock every morning -- read it in five different languages. Believe me, he studied the Word of God. And you and I need to study the Word; we need to get the meaning of the Bible.

4. Meditate on the Bible.

Meditation is something that God taught His people. The Word of God was to be before the children of Israel all the time -- so that they could meditate on it. "And these words,

which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" ([Deut. 6:6-9](#)). Now that is an amazing statement coming from the Lord. He told them to write the Word of God upon the doorposts. In other words, wherever they turned, it was just like looking at billboards. You cannot drive up and down our streets and highways without seeing liquor signs and cigarette signs -- billboards galore! Now you can understand why people today drink liquor and why they smoke cigarettes -- it is before them all the time. The Lord knew human nature. He knew us. And He told His people to get the Word where they would see it. It was on their doorposts, on their gates, and they wore it on their garments. And they were to talk about it when they were walking. They were to talk about the Word when they sat down. They were to talk about it when they went to bed and until they went to sleep. God asked His people to meditate on His Word.

Now what does it really mean to meditate on the Word of God? There is a very interesting statement over in the first Psalm: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" ([Ps. 1:1-2](#)). To meditate is to ruminate, to bring to mind, and to consider over and over. Ruminating is what a cow is doing when she is chewing her cud. You know how the old cow goes out in the morning, and while the grass is fresh with dew she grazes. Then when the sun comes up and the weather is hot, the cow lies down under a tree, or stands there in the shade. You see her chewing and you wonder what in the world that cow is chewing. She will chew there for an hour or two. Well, she is meditating, friend. She is bringing the grass she ate in the morning (we are told that a cow has a complex stomach) out of one chamber and is transferring it to another. In the process she is going over it again, chewing it up good. You and I need to learn to do that in our thought processes. We are to get the Word of God, read it, have it out where we can look at it, then think about it, meditate on it.

Many times in preparing a message I'll take a verse of Scripture and spend hours doing nothing but reading it over and over, checking what others have said about it, and just keep reading it. Finally new truth will break out from that particular passage. I remember hearing Dr. Harry Ironside say that he had heard a lecture on the Song of Solomon which left him dissatisfied. He said that he read the Song of Solomon again, got down on his knees and asked God to give him an understanding of it. He did that again and again -- in fact, he did it for weeks and months. Finally new light broke from that book. When I teach the Song of Solomon I generally give Dr. Ironside's interpretation for two reasons: it satisfies my own mind and heart more than does any other interpretation I have heard, and I know the man who got it had spent a great deal of time in meditation.

There are folk who write to us saying that the wife listens to our Bible study by radio at home, and the husband listens to it at work, and at the dinner table they discuss the Scripture that was covered. That is meditation; it is going back over it again. Riding along in the car alone is a good place to take a passage of Scripture and really give thought to it.

How many of you, after you have had "devotions," meditate upon that passage during the day? Most people read it and then forget it -- never thinking about it again until it is called to their attention. Or, if they read it at night, they jump into bed as quickly as they can, turn out the light, and go to sleep, forgetting all about it. Meditation is almost a lost art in our contemporary society. Frankly, television in many homes absolutely blots out the possibility for meditation. It is changing the spiritual life of many families today. One of the reasons that our churches are becoming colder and more indifferent to the Word of God is simply because there is that lack of meditation upon the Word of God.

Remember the Ethiopian eunuch who was riding along reading Isaiah in [Acts 8](#). He was actually studying Isaiah, because he was in a passage with which he was having trouble -- he did not know what it meant. Here is a man who is reading and studying, and the Spirit of God is going to open the Word of God to him. That is the reason the Holy Spirit brought Philip there to explain the chapter to the Ethiopian. It opened up a new world to him, and he came to know Christ. The record says that he went on his way rejoicing. What was making him rejoice? He was meditating. He was going back over that fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

Have you ever meditated on that Lamb who was brought as a sheep to the slaughter? Who was He? He came from heaven and identified Himself with us who like sheep have gone astray and have turned every one to our own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Do you meditate on these things? The Ethiopian did. It always has been a matter of speculation as to what he did after that. Tradition says that he went back to his land and founded the Coptic church of Ethiopia. That could well be; we do not know. However, the interesting thing is that he went on his way rejoicing, which lets us know that he was meditating on the Word of God.

5. Read What Others Have Written on the Scriptures.

I know that this is a dangerous rule, because many folk depend on what someone else says about the Bible. Also there are many books on the market today that give wrong teaching concerning the Word of God. We need to test everything that is written by the Bible itself.

However, you and I should consult a good commentary. With each outline of the books of the Bible I list recommended books, commentaries that I have read and have found helpful. You will find it very profitable to read what others have said. Actually, you are getting all the distilled sweetness and study of the centuries when you read books written by men who have been guided in their study by the Spirit of God. You and I should profit by this. There have been some wonderful, profound works on the books of the Bible.

In addition to commentaries, a concordance is invaluable. I can recommend three: Young's concordance, Strong's concordance, and Cruden's concordance -- take your pick. Also you will need a good Bible dictionary. The Davis Bible Dictionary is good if you don't get the wrong edition. Unger's Bible Dictionary I can recommend without reservation.

Every teacher and preacher of the gospel has a set of books that he studies. He needs them. Someone asks, "Should he present verbatim what somebody else has written?" No, he should never do that, unless he gives credit to the author. But he has a perfect right to use what others have written. I have been told that some of my feeble messages are given by others, and sometimes credit is given and sometimes no mention is made of the author at all. As far as I'm personally concerned, it makes no difference, but it does reveal the character of the individual who will use someone else's material verbatim and not give credit for it. A professor in seminary solved this problem. When someone asked him if he should quote other writers, he said, "You ought to graze on everybody's pasture, but give your own milk." And that means that you are to read what others have written, but you put it in your own thought patterns and express it your way. You have a perfect right to do that. The important thing is that we should take advantage of the study of other men in the Word of God.

6. Obey the Bible.

For the understanding and the study of the Scriptures, obedience is essential. Abraham is an example of this. God appeared to him when He called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and again when he was in the Promised Land. But Abraham ran off to Egypt when famine came, and during this time God had no word for him. Not until Abraham was back in the land did God appear to him again. Why? Because of lack of obedience. Until Abraham obeyed what God had already revealed to him, God was not prepared to give to him any new truth. So it is with us. When we obey, God opens up new truth for us.

Even the gospel which is given to save our souls is given for the very definite purpose of obedience. The greatest document that ever has been written on the gospel is the Epistle to the Romans. And Paul put around the gospel this matter of obedience. He begins with it: "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" ([Rom. 1:5](#)). Again at the end of Romans, Paul comes back to this: "But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" ([Rom. 16:26](#)). "Obedience of faith" is the last thing Paul says in this epistle. What is between? He sets before us what the gospel is, that great doctrinal section; then he concludes with a section on duty -- what we're to do. Paul put around the gospel this matter of obedience.

Obedience to the faith. This is where Adam and Eve went wrong. She not only listened to Satan, the enemy of God, but she also disobeyed God.

Obedience to God is very important. And we must recognize that God will not continue to reveal truth to us if we become disobedient. We must obey the Bible if we are to profit from its reading.

Also obedience is important because there are folk who measure Christianity by you and by me. Cowan has well said, "The best way to defend the Gospel is to live a life worthy of the Gospel." That is the way you prove it is the Word of God.

Four clergymen were discussing the merits of various translations of the Bible. One liked the King James Version best because of its simple, beautiful English. Another liked the

American Standard Version because it is more literal and comes nearer to the Hebrew and Greek texts. Still another liked a modern translation because of its up-to-date vocabulary. The fourth minister was silent. When asked to express his opinion, he replied, "I like my mother's translation best. She translated it into life, and it was the most convincing translation I have ever seen."

You will recall that Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" ([2Cor. 3:2-3](#)).

The Gospel is written a chapter a day
By deeds that you do and words that you say.
Men read what you say whether faithless or true.
Say, what is the Gospel according to you?
-- Author Unknown

That little jingle is true. Oh, how important it is to obey the Bible! I believe that today Christianity is being hurt more by those who are church members than by any other group. That is one of the reasons that we have all of this rebellion on the outside -- rebellion against the establishment, which includes the church. A placard carried by one in a protest march had four words on it: "Church no; Jesus, yes." Candidly, the lives of a great many in the church are turning people away from the church. A barrister in England years ago was asked why he did not become a Christian. This was his answer: "I, too, might have become a Christian if I had not met so many who said they were Christians." How unfortunate that is! We need to examine our own lives in this connection. How important it is to obey the Word of God!

7. Pass It On to Others.

Not only read the Bible, not only study the Bible, not only meditate on the Bible, and not only read what others have written about it, but pass it on to others. That is what we all should do. You will reach a saturation point in the study of the Word unless you do share it with others. God won't let you withdraw yourself from mankind and become some sort of a walking Bible encyclopedia, knowing everything, while the rest of us remain ignorant. I think that is the reason He said: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" ([Heb. 10:25](#)).

God has told us to be witnesses. He said, "Ye shall be witnesses" ([Acts 1:8](#)). He did not say that we should be scholars, walking encyclopedias, or memory books. He did not say we should bury God's truth in a notebook. Someone has said that education is a process by which information in the professor's notebook is transferred to the student's notebook, without passing through the mind of either. Well, there is a great deal of Bible truth like that. It is not practiced, not shared. We are called to be witnesses today, therefore we ought to pass it on to others.

I learned this lesson when I was in seminary. I pastored a little church, as did five other fellows, and we found that when we were graduated, we were at least a year ahead of the other members of the class. Why? Because we were smarter than the others? No. Because

we were passing it on. God was able to funnel into us a great deal more than He might have otherwise.

My friend, pass it on.

These, then, are the seven basic guidelines to follow as you take in your hands the Word of God:

1. Begin with prayer.
2. Read the Bible.
3. Study the Bible.
4. Meditate on the Bible.
5. Read what others have written on the Bible.
6. Obey the Bible.
7. Pass it on to others.

Introduction

The Book of Genesis is one of the two important key books of the Bible. The book that opens the Old Testament (Genesis) and the book that opens the New Testament (Matthew) are the two books which I feel are the key to the understanding of the Scriptures.

Before beginning this study, I would like to suggest that you read the Book of Genesis through. It would be preferable to read it at one sitting. I recognize that this may be impossible for you to do, and if you want to know the truth, I have not been able to do it in one sitting. It has taken me several sittings because of interruptions. However, if you find it possible to read through Genesis at one sitting, you will find it very profitable.

Let me give you a bird's-eye view of Genesis, a view that will cover the total spectrum of the book. There are certain things that you should note because the Book of Genesis is, actually, germane to the entire Scripture. The fact of the matter is that Genesis is a book that states many things for the first time: creation, man, woman, sin, sabbath, marriage, family, labor, civilization, culture, murder, sacrifice, races, languages, redemption, and cities.

You will also find certain phrases that occur very frequently. For instance, "these are the generations of" is an important expression used frequently because the Book of Genesis gives the families of early history. That is important to us because we are members of the human family that begins here.

A number of very interesting characters are portrayed for us. Someone has called this "the book of biographies." There are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Pharaoh, and the eleven sons of Jacob besides Joseph. You will find that God is continually blessing Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. In addition, those who are associated with them -- Lot, Abimelech, Potiphar, the butler, and Pharaoh -- are also blessed of God.

In this book you will find mention of the covenant. There are frequent appearances of the Lord to the patriarchs, especially to Abraham. The altar is prominent in this book. Jealousy in the home is found here. Egypt comes before us in this book as it does

nowhere else. The judgments upon sin are mentioned here, and there are evident leadings of Providence.

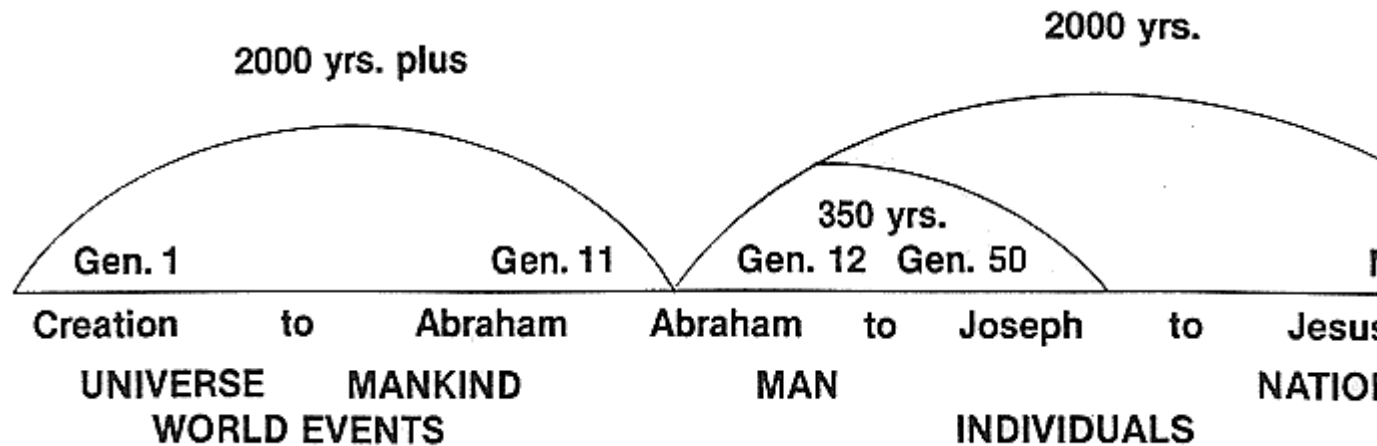
As we study, we need to keep in mind something that Browning wrote years ago in a grammarian's funeral essay: "Image the whole, then execute the parts. Fancy the fabric, quiet, e'er you build, e'er steel strike fire from quartz, e'er mortar dab brick." In other words, get the total picture of this book. I tell students that there are two ways of studying the Bible; one is with the telescope and the other way is with the microscope. At first, you need to get the telescopic view. After that, study it with a microscope.

A great preacher of the past, Robinson of England, has written something which I would like to write indelibly on the minds and hearts of God's people today:

We live in the age of books. They pour out for us from the press in an ever increasing multitude. And we are always reading manuals, textbooks, articles, books of devotion, books of criticism, books about the Bible, books about the Gospels, all are devoured with avidity. But what amount of time and labor do we give to the consideration of the Gospels themselves? We're constantly tempted to imagine that we get good more quickly by reading some modern statement of truth which we find comparatively easy to appropriate because it is presented to us in a shape, and from a standpoint, with which our education, or it may be partly association, has made us familiar. But the good we acquire readily is not that which enters most deeply into our being and becomes an abiding possession. It would be well if we could realize quite simply that nothing worth the having is to be gained without the winning. The great truths of nature are not offered to us in such a form as to make it easy to grasp them. The treasures of grace must be sought with all the skill and energy which are characteristic of the man who is searching for goodly pearls. (Robinson, *The Personal Life of the Clergy*.)

I love that statement because I believe that the Bible itself will speak to our hearts in a way that no other book can do. Therefore we have included the text of Scripture in this study. New translations are appearing in our day; in fact, they are coming from the presses as fast and prolifically as rabbits multiply. However, I will continue to use the Authorized or King James Version. I refuse to substitute the pungency of genius with the bland, colorless, and tasteless mediocrity of the present day.

Major Divisions Of The Book



Picture: Major Divisions Of Genesis

Where would you divide the Book of Genesis if you divided it into two parts? Notice that the first eleven chapters constitute a whole and that, beginning with chapter 12 through the remainder of the book, we find an altogether different section. The two parts differ in several ways: The first section extends from creation to Abraham. The second section extends from Abraham through Joseph. The first section deals with major subjects, subjects which still engage the minds of thoughtful men in our day: the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Tower of Babel. The second section has to do with personalities: Abraham, the man of faith; Isaac, the beloved son; Jacob, the chosen and chastened son; and Joseph, his suffering and glory.

Although that is a major division, there is another division even more significant. It has to do with time. The first eleven chapters cover a minimum time span of two thousand years -- actually, two thousand years plus. I feel that it is safe to say that they may cover several hundred thousand years. I believe this first section of Genesis can cover any time in the past that you may need to fit into your particular theory, and the chances are that you would come short of it even then. At least we know the book covers a minimum of two thousand years in the first eleven chapters, but the second section of thirty-nine chapters covers only three hundred and fifty years. In fact, beginning with [Genesis 12](#) and running all the way through the Old Testament and the New Testament, a total time span of only two thousand years is covered. Therefore, as far as time is concerned, you are halfway through the Bible when you cover the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

This should suggest to your mind and heart that God had some definite purpose in giving this first section to us. Do you think that God is putting the emphasis on this first section or on the rest of the Bible? Isn't it evident that He is putting the emphasis on the last part? The first section has to do with the universe and with creation, but the last part deals with man, with nations, and with the person of Jesus Christ. God was more interested in Abraham than He was in the entire created universe. And, my friend, God is more interested in you and attaches more value to you than He does to the entire physical universe.

Let me further illustrate this. Of the eighty-nine chapters in the four Gospel records, only four chapters cover the first thirty years of the life of the Lord Jesus while eighty-five

chapters cover the last three years of His life, and twenty-seven chapters cover the final eight days of His life. Where does that indicate that the Spirit of God is placing the emphasis? I am sure you will agree that the emphasis is on the last part, the last eight days covered by the twenty-seven chapters. And what is that all about? It's about the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the important part of the Gospel record. In other words, God has given the Gospels that you might believe that Christ died for our sins and that He was raised for our justification. That is essential. That is the all-important truth.

May I say that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are merely the introduction to the Bible, and we need to look at them in this fashion. This does not mean that we are going to pass over the first eleven chapters. Actually, we will spend quite a bit of time with them.

Genesis is the "seed plot" of the Bible, and here we find the beginning, the source, the birth of everything. The Book of Genesis is just like the bud of a beautiful rose, and it opens out into the rest of the Bible. The truth here is in germ form.

One of the best divisions which can be made of the Book of Genesis is according to the genealogies -- i.e., according to the families.

[Gen 1:1](#) -- [Gen 2:6](#) Book of Generations of Heavens and Earth
[Gen. 2:7](#) -- [Gen. 6:8](#) Book of Generations of Adam
[Gen. 6:9](#) -- [Gen. 9:29](#) Generations of Noah
[Gen. 10:1](#) -- [Gen. 11:9](#) Generations of Sons of Noah
[Gen. 11:10-26](#) Generations of Sons of Shem
[Gen. 11:27](#) -- [Gen. 25:11](#) Generations of Terah
[Gen. 25:12-18](#) Generations of Ishmael
[Gen. 25:19](#) -- [Gen. 35:29](#) Generations of Isaac
[Gen. 36:1](#) -- [Gen. 37:1](#) Generations of Esau
[Gen. 37:2](#) -- [Gen. 50:26](#) Generations of Jacob

All of these are given to us in the Book of Genesis. It is a book of families. Genesis is an amazing book, and it will help us to look at it from this viewpoint.

Outline

I. Entrance of Sin on Earth, Chapters 1-11

A. Creation, Chapters 1 and 2

1. Heaven and Earth, [Gen. 1:1](#)
"Create" (bara) occurs only 3 times, [vv. 1,21,27](#)
2. Earth Became Waste and Void, [Gen. 1:2](#)
3. Re-creation, [Gen. 1:3](#) through [Gen. 2:25](#)
 - (a) First Day -- Light, [Gen. 1:3-5](#)
 - (b) Second Day -- Air Spaces (Firmament), [Gen. 1:6-8](#)
 - (c) Third Day -- Dry Land Appears and Plant Life, [Gen. 1:9-13](#)
 - (d) Fourth Day -- Sun, Moon, Stars Appear, [Gen. 1:14-19](#)
 - (e) Fifth Day -- Animal Life (Biology), [Gen. 1:20-23](#)
 - (f) Sixth Day -- Fertility of Creation and Creation of Man, [Gen. 1:24-31](#)

(g) Seventh Day -- Sabbath, [Gen. 2:1-3](#)

(h) Recapitulation of the Creation of Man, [Gen. 2:4-25](#) (Law of recurrence)

B. Fall, [Gen. 3](#) and [Gen. 4](#)

1. Root of Sin -- Doubting and Disobeying God
2. Fruit of Sin -- "Out of the heart proceed . . . murders . . ." ([Matt. 15:19](#))

C. Flood (Deluge), [Gen. 5](#) through [Gen. 9](#)

1. Book of Generations of Adam -- Through Seth
Beginning of Man's History --
Obituary Notices, [Gen. 5](#)
2. Antediluvian Civilization -- Cause of Flood and Construction of Ark, [Gen. 6](#)
3. Judgment of Flood, [Gen. 7](#)
4. Postdiluvian Civilization -- After the Flood, [Gen. 8](#)
5. Postdiluvian Life -- New Beginning, [Gen. 9](#)

D. Tower of Babel and Confusion of Tongues, [Gen. 10](#) and [Gen. 11](#)

1. Ethnology -- Sons of Noah, [Gen. 10](#)
2. Tower of Babel, [Gen. 11](#) (Contrast to Day of Pentecost)

II. Preparation for the Coming of the Redeemer of All Mankind, [Gen. 12](#) through [Gen. 50](#)

A. Abraham (Faith), [Gen. 12](#) through [Gen. 23](#)

Development of faith by seven appearances of God

1. God's Call and Promise to Abram --
His Response by Lapse of Faith, [Gen. 12](#)
2. Abram Returns to Land from Egypt --
Separates from Lot --
God Then Appears the Third Time to Abram, [Gen. 13](#)
3. The First War -- Abram Delivers Lot --
The First Priest --
Abram Blessed by Melchizedek, [Gen. 14](#)
4. God Reveals Himself More Completely to Abram --
Reaffirms His Promises, [Gen. 15](#)
5. Unbelief of Sarai and Abram --
Birth of Ishmael, [Gen. 16](#)
6. God Makes Covenant with Abraham (Abram Becomes Abraham) --
Confirms Promise to Abraham About a Son, [Gen. 17](#)
7. God Reveals Coming Destruction of Sodom to Abraham --
Abraham Intercedes on Behalf of Inhabitants, [Gen. 18](#)
8. Angels Warn Lot -- Lot Leaves Sodom --
God Destroys Cities of the Plain, [Gen. 19](#)
9. Abraham Repeats Sin at Gerar About
Relationship of Sarah, [Gen. 20](#)
10. Birth of Isaac -- Hagar and Ishmael Cast Out --

Abraham at Beer-sheba, [Gen. 21](#)

11. God Commands Abraham to Offer Isaac --
Restrains Him --
Reconfirms Covenant with Abraham, [Gen. 22](#)
12. Death of Sarah --
Abraham Purchases Machpelah Cave for Burial
Place, [Gen. 23](#)

B. Isaac (the Beloved Son), [Gen. 24](#) through [Gen. 26](#)

Choosing of a bride compares with Christ and the Church.

1. Abraham Sends Servant for Bride for Isaac --
Rebekah Returns with Him --
Becomes Isaac's Bride, [Gen. 24](#)
2. Death of Abraham --
Birth of Esau and Jacob (twins) to Isaac and Rebekah --
Esau Sells Birthright to Jacob, [Gen. 25](#)
3. God Confirms Covenant to Isaac --
Isaac Misrepresents Relationship with Rebekah --
Isaac Digs Well in Gerar, [Gen. 26](#)

C. Jacob, [Gen. 27](#) through [Gen. 36](#)

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth"

1. Jacob and Rebekah Connive
to Get Blessing Intended for Esau, [Gen. 27](#)
2. Jacob Leaves Home --
At Bethel God Appears to Him --
Confirms Abrahamic Covenant, [Gen. 28](#)
3. Jacob Arrives in Haran --
Meets Rachel and Uncle Laban --
Serves for Rachel --
Deceived into Marrying Leah, [Gen. 29](#)
4. Birth of Sons to Jacob --
Jacob Prepares to Leave Laban --
Jacob's Bargain Pays Off, [Gen. 30](#)
5. Jacob Flees from Haran -- Laban Overtakes Him --
Jacob and Laban Make Mizpah Covenant, [Gen. 31](#)
6. Crisis in Life of Jacob: At Peniel a Man Wrestles with Him --
Jacob's Name Changed to Israel, [Gen. 32](#)
7. Jacob Meets Esau --
Jacob Journeys to Shalem, [Gen. 33](#)
8. Scandal in Jacob's Family: Dinah Defiled --
Brothers Avenge by Slaying Men of Hamor, [Gen. 34](#)
9. Jacob Returns to Bethel --
Rachel Dies at Bethlehem --
Isaac Dies at Hebron, Chapter 35
10. Family of Esau Which Becomes Nation of Edom, [Gen. 36](#)

D. Joseph (Suffering and Glory), [Gen. 37](#) through [Gen. 50](#)

1. Jacob Dwells in Canaan --
Joseph Sold into Slavery, [Gen. 37](#)
2. Sin and Shame of Judah, [Gen. 38](#)
3. Humiliation in Egypt, [Gen. 39](#) and [Gen. 40](#)
 - (a) Overseer in House of Potiphar -- Tempted Then Framed by Wife of Potiphar -- Imprisoned, [Gen. 39](#)
 - (b) Joseph in Prison -- Interprets Dreams of Baker and Butler, [Gen. 40](#)
4. Exaltation in Egypt, [Gen. 41](#) through [Gen. 48](#)
 - (a) Joseph Interprets Dreams of Pharaoh --
Made Overseer of Egypt -- Marries Asenath --
Birth of Manasseh and Ephraim, [Gen. 41](#)
 - (b) Jacob Sends Ten Sons to Egypt for Corn --
Audience with Joseph --
Leave Simeon as Hostage --
Return Home with Corn and Refunded Money, [Gen. 42](#)
 - (c) Jacob Sends Sons (Benjamin Included) Again to Egypt --
Joseph Entertains Brothers (Does Not Reveal His Identity), [Gen. 43](#)
 - (d) Joseph Sends Brothers Home --
Arrested by Steward --
Cup Found in Benjamin's Sack --
Judah Pleads for Benjamin, [Gen. 44](#)
 - (e) Joseph Reveals Identity --
Tender Reunion with Brothers --
Invites Jacob and All Family to Egypt, [Gen. 45](#)
 - (f) Jacob with Family (70) Moves to Egypt --
Jacob and Joseph Reunited, [Gen. 46](#)
 - (g) Jacob and Brothers Dwell in Goshen --
Presented to Pharaoh --
Famine Forces Egyptians to Sell Land to Joseph
for Pharaoh -- Joseph Swears He Will Bury Jacob in Canaan, [Gen. 47](#)
 - (h) Jacob on Deathbed Blesses Joseph's Sons, [Gen. 48](#)
5. Death and Burial of Jacob and Joseph, [Gen. 49](#) and [Gen. 50](#)
 - (a) Jacob Gives Deathbed Blessing and
Prophecy for Twelve Sons, [Gen. 49](#)
 - (b) Death of Jacob and Burial in Canaan --
Death and Burial of Joseph in Egypt, [Gen. 50](#)

Chapter 1

THEME: Creation of the universe; construction of the earth; day one -- light; day two -- air spaces; day three -- dry land and plant life; day four -- sun, moon, and stars appear; day five -- animal life; day six -- fertility of animal life; creation of man

Creation Of The Universe (1:1-2)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth [[Gen. 1:1](#)].

This is one of the most profound statements that has ever been made, and yet we find that it is a statement that is certainly challenged in this hour in which we are living. I think that this verse is all we have of the actual creation -- with the exception, as we shall see, of the creation of man and animals later on in the Book of Genesis. But this is the creation story, and I'll admit that it is a very brief story, indeed.

An incident was told by Paul Bellamy, the late city editor of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, that while he was making the rounds of the reporters' desks one night, he noticed one of his men grinding out a "tapeworm" on what Bellamy regarded as a relatively unimportant event. "Cut it down!" he said. "After all, the story of the creation was told in Genesis in 282 words." The reporter shot back, "Yes, and I've always thought we could have been saved a lot of arguments later if someone had just written another couple hundred."

It is interesting to note that God certainly has given us an abridged edition. The question arises: What did He have in mind when He gave us this particular section? What was the Author's purpose here? Was it His purpose to teach geology? There is a great deal of argument and disagreement at this particular juncture. Sometime ago here in California, the state board of education voted to include the biblical so-called theory of creation in science books. Now frankly, I'm not so sure that I'm happy about that. Someone will say that I ought to be because it is a step in the right direction. My friends, I'll tell you why I'm not happy. My concern is relative to the character of the teachers who teach it. We don't have enough teachers with a Christian background and with a Bible background to be able to teach it properly. Very few of the public school teachers are prepared, really, to teach the story of creation.

Dr. Ralph Girard, professor of biology and dean of the graduate division at the University of California at Davis is reported by the press to have made the comment that the "theory of creation" makes about as much sense as teaching about the stork. He asked if a scientific course on reproduction should also mention the stork theory. The very interesting thing is that the stork theory is not mentioned in the Bible at all, but the creation story is mentioned. His comparison is not quite warranted, because the Bible deals literally with this matter of procreation, and if you read your Bible carefully, you never could have the viewpoint of the stork theory! So what this man says is certainly beside the point but reveals a very antagonistic attitude toward the Bible. I'm of the opinion that this man probably knows a great deal about this particular subject, which seems to be biology, but he knows very little about the Word of God. This is quite obvious from the type of statement he has made.

This problem of origin provokes more violent controversy, wild theories, and wide disagreement than any other. Always there is the inclusion of men's hypotheses, and as a result there is a babble of voices that has drowned out the clear voice of God. Actually,

there are two extreme groups who have blurred the issue, and they have muddied the waters of understanding by their dogmatic assumptions and assertions. One group is comprised of the arrogant scientists who assume that biological and philosophical evolution are the gospel truth. Their assumed axiom is "the assured finding of science," and we'll look into that in a moment. The other group is comprised of the young and proud theologians who arrogate to themselves the super-knowledge that they have discovered how God did it. They write and speak learnedly about some clever theory that reconciles science and the Bible. They look with disdain upon the great giants of biblical expositors of the past as being Bible dwarfs compared to them.

I would say that both of these groups would do well to consider a statement that was made to Job when the Lord finally appeared to him. God asked him the question: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding" ([Job 38:4](#)). In other words, God is saying to man, "You talk about the origin of the universe, but you don't even know where you were when I laid the foundation of the earth!"

There are a great many theories as to how the world began, but all of them can be boiled down to fit into a twofold classification: one is creation, and the other is speculation. All theories fall into one of these two divisions.

The theory of evolution is comprised of many different theories in our day, and some of the most reputable scientists of the past, as well as of the present, reject evolution. So we can't put down the theory of evolution as being a scientific statement like $2 + 2 = 4$. Then there is the creation account in [Genesis 1](#), which must be accepted by faith. It is very interesting that God has made it that way -- by faith is the only way in the world by which you can accept it. Notice what the writer to the Hebrews said: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" ([Heb. 11:1-3](#)). So today the great problem still remains. How did it get from nothing to something? The only way that you can ever arrive at an answer is by faith or by speculation -- and speculation is very unscientific.

Now let us look at some of the theories of origin. There are those who tell us that we should accept the scientific answer. I would like to ask, what is the scientific answer? What science are we talking about? In the year 1806 Professor Lyell said that the French Institute enumerated not less than eighty geological theories which were hostile to the Scriptures, but not one of these theories is held in our day.

Moses is the human agent whom God used to write the Book of Genesis, and I think he would smile at all the disturbance today regarding the creation story because he did not write it with the intention of giving a scientific account. Paul tells us the purpose of all Scripture: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" ([2Tim. 3:16-17](#)). The purpose of the Scripture is for instruction in righteousness. It was not written to teach you geology or biology. It was written to show man's relationship to God and God's requirements for

man and what man must do to be saved. You can write this over the first part of the Book of Genesis: "What must I do to be saved?"

May I ask you, if God had given a scientific statement of creation, how many people of Moses' day could have understood it? How many people even in our day could grasp it? You must remember that the Bible was not written for only learned professors but also for simple folk of every age and in every land. If it had been written in the scientific language of Moses' time, it certainly would have been rejected.

Therefore, men have proposed several solutions relative to the origin of the universe. One is that it is an illusion. Well, that is certainly contrary to fact, is it not? And yet there are people who hold that theory. There are others who believe that it spontaneously arose out of nothing. (In a way, this is what the Bible states, although it goes further and says that God spoke it into existence; He created it.) Another view is that it had no origin but has existed eternally. A fourth view is that it was created, and this breaks down into many different theories which men hold in an attempt to explain the origin of the universe.

I have before me some of these theories which men have advanced down through the history of the world. Here is a statement by Dr. Harlow Shapely, the former director of the Harvard Observatory, who commented that we are still imbedded in abysmal ignorance of the world in which we live. He observed that "we have advanced very little, relative to the total surmisable extent of knowledge, beyond the level of wisdom acquired by animals of long racial experience. We are, to be sure, no longer afraid of strange squeaks in the dark, nor completely superstitious about the dead. On many occasions we are valiantly rational. Nevertheless, we know how much the unknown transcends what we know." In other words, we are still absolutely in the dark relative to the origin of this earth on which we live.

Dr. Loren C. Eiseley, Office of the Provost, University of Pennsylvania, was asked about this; he answered that "we do not know any more about matter and how it is produced than we know about spiritual things. Therefore, I think it is unwise to say in our present state of knowledge that the one precludes the other. The universe seems to exist as a series of emergent levels, none of which is like the level below. That man and all the rest of life have evolved and changed is undeniable, but what lies beneath these exterior manifestations, we do not know. I wish I could answer your question, but to clothe my ignorance in big words would benefit neither yourself nor me."

One article says that man is on the verge of discovering the mystery of the origin of the world. That happened to be written back in 1961. We haven't had anything new on that since then, by the way.

The biologist Edwin Conklin, speaking of evolution, stated that the probability of life originating by accident is "comparable to the probability of the unabridged dictionary originating from an explosion in a print shop." That sounds very unscientific, coming from a scientist, but it's true.

There seem to be at least three theories of the origin of the universe which even astronomers have suggested, and it is interesting to note them. One is known as the "steady state" theory, one is the "big bang" theory, and another is the "oscillating" theory.

A Caltech scientist, Dr. William A. Baum, speaking at UCLA, told the National Academy of Science that new findings tend to rule out the "steady state" theory that the universe has always existed and that new matter is continually being created. Several years ago that was the accepted theory; now they have a new theory for the origin of the universe. Dr. Baum apparently held the "big bang" theory, which is that a great explosion took place billions of years ago and that we are in for another one in probably another ten billion years. I don't think we need to worry about that a great deal, but it is an interesting theory and one that was fathered in Great Britain.

Several years ago, Dr. Louis Leakey, an anthropologist (the son of a missionary, by the way) discovered in Africa what he called a missing link. He dug up pieces of a skull with well-developed teeth, called it the "nutcracker man" and claimed it belonged to a teenage youth about six hundred thousand years ago. Well, we have had theories like that before, and since we've heard no more of this one since 1961, I guess the scientific world didn't fall for it.

There are other ways for explaining the origin of man. Dr. Lawrence S. Dillon, associate professor of biology at Texas A and M College, says that man is not an animal but a plant which evolved from brown seaweed. Now maybe you have been looking in the wrong place for your grandpa and grandma. Some folk have been looking up a tree. Now we are told that we should be down at the beach pulling out seaweed because that is grandpa and grandma! Some of this speculation really becomes ridiculous.

A long time ago I read in a leading secular magazine that: "After centuries of bitter arguments over how life on earth began, an awe-inspiring answer is emerging out of the shrewd and patient detective work in laboratories all over the world." You would think that by now we would be getting some straight answers or at least a little encouragement, but none has been forthcoming.

It was the practice, according to J. V. N. Talmage, that the dogma which scientists followed was this: "The archaeological finds of prehistoric cultural objects must be so arranged that the cruder industries must always be dated earlier than those of a 'more advanced' type, regardless of where they are found." It has been a little disconcerting to find some of the advanced civilizations underneath those who seem to be of prehistoric time.

So many other theories are offered today about how the earth began. Dr. Klaus Mampell from Germany reportedly said that he didn't see any more reason for seeing us (the human race) connected with apes than with canary birds or kangaroos.

The evolutionary theory is divided up into many different phases and viewpoints. It has never been demonstrated as being true. It is unfortunate that when you get down to the level of the pseudo-scientists, and I'm thinking of the teachers today in our public schools who teach science, they really are not in a position to give a fair view because they were given only one viewpoint in college.

There is no unanimous acceptance of evolution even by scientists. Here is a quotation from Dr. G. A. Kerkut, of the Department of Physiology and Biochemistry at the

University of Southampton in England. Though he himself is an evolutionist, in his book, *The Implications of Evolution*, he writes: "There is a theory which states that many living animals can be observed over the course of time to undergo changes so that new species are formed. This can be called the "Special Theory of Evolution" and can be demonstrated in certain cases by experiments. On the other hand there is the theory that all of the living forms in the world have arisen from a single source which itself came from an inorganic form. This theory can be called the "General Theory of Evolution" and the evidence that supports it is not sufficiently strong to allow us to consider it as anything more than a working hypothesis." Now listen to the statement of the Swedish botanist, Dr. Heribert Nilsson, who is also an evolutionist: "My attempts to demonstrate evolution by experiment carried on for more than forty years, have completely failed. . . . At least I should hardly be accused of having started from a preconceived antievolutionary standpoint. . . ." It may be firmly maintained that it is not even possible to make a caricature out of paleobiological facts. The fossil material is now so complete that it has been possible to construct new classes, and the lack of transitional series cannot be explained as due to the scarcity of material. Deficiencies are real. They will never be filled. . . . The idea of an evolution rests on pure belief."

May I say to you, he is moving into the realm of religion! My friend, to be an evolutionist you have to take it by faith. Evolution is speculation and always has been that. But, unfortunately, a great many folk have accepted it as fact.

In our day a group of theologians (young theologians for the most part) who, not wanting to be called intellectual obscurantists, have adopted what is known as "theistic evolution." If you would like to know what one scientist says about it, Kirtly Mather, in *Science Ponders Religion*, says: "When a theologian accepts evolution as the process used by the creator, he must be willing to go all the way with it. Not only is it an orderly process, it is a continuing one. The golden age for man -- if any -- is in the future, not in the past. . . . Moreover, the creative process of evolution is not to be interrupted by any supernatural intervention. The evolution of the first living cells from previously existing nonliving materials may represent a quantum jump rather than an infinitesimal step along the path of progress, but it is an entirely natural development." Theistic evolution is probably the most unrealistic of all theories. It is almost an unreasonable tenet and an illogical position. There are those today who are trying to run with the hare and with the hounds. They would like to move up with the unbelievers, but they also like to carry a Scofield Bible under their arm. My friend, it is difficult to do both. It is like that old Greek race in which a contestant rode with one foot on one horse and the other foot on another horse. It was marvelous when the two horses kept on the same route. But, believe me, when one of the horses decided to go in another direction, the rider had to determine which one he was going with. That is the condition of the theistic evolutionist. He ordinarily ends up riding the wrong horse, by the way.

In our day there is so much misinformation in the minds of intelligent human beings. For example, before me is a clipping from a secular magazine from several years ago. It posed a question, then answered it. First, the question: "What, according to biblical records, is the date of the creation of the world?" Now listen to the answer that was given: "4,004 B.C." How utterly ridiculous can one be?

An article in Life magazine concerning the origin of life said that at some indeterminate point -- some say two billion years ago, some a billion and a half -- life miraculously appeared on the surface of the deep. What form it took, science cannot specify. All that can be said, according to this article, is that "through some agency certain giant molecules acquired the ability to duplicate themselves." My friend, are you willing to go along with the theory that giant molecules acquired the ability to duplicate themselves?

Other ridiculous theories have been advanced. One is that man began on this earth from garbage that some prehistoric intelligence left on this earth in the dim and distant past. That statement comes from a scientist! While some scientists send us out to look for our ancestors in the trees, another sends us out to look at the seaweed, and now some send us to the garbage can! This is getting worse and worse, is it not? I don't know about you, but I feel that God's statement of creation still stands in this modern age.

A famous definition of evolution which Herbert Spencer gave stated that: "An integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent, homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation." You ponder that one for awhile, friend!

It still makes more sense to me to read: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Who created the universe? God did. He created it out of nothing. When? I don't know, and nobody else knows. Some men say one billion years ago, some say two billion, and now some say five billion. I personally suspect that they are all pikers. I think it was created long before that. My friend, we need to keep in mind that God has eternity behind Him. What do you think He has been doing during all the billions of years of the past? Waiting for you and me to come on the scene? No, He has been busy. He has had this creation a long time to work with. You see, He really has not told us very much, has He? It is presumptuous of little man down here on earth to claim to know more than he really knows.

You cannot put one little star in motion;
You cannot shape one single forest leaf,
Nor fling a mountain up, nor sink an ocean,
Presumptuous pigmy, large with unbelief!
You cannot bring one dawn of regal splendor,
Nor bid the day to shadowy twilight fall,
Nor send the pale moon forth with radiance tender;
And dare you doubt the One who has done it all?
-- Sherman A. Nagel, Sr.

It behooves us to just accept that majestic statement which opens the Word of God: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And with the psalmist let us consider His heavens, the work of His fingers, the moon and the stars, which He has ordained ([Ps. 8:3](#)) and realize that "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" ([Ps. 19:1](#)).

The apostle Paul wrote this to the Romans: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" ([Rom. 1:20](#)). And the

writer to the Hebrews says: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" ([Heb. 11:3](#)). We must accept creation by faith. Even science cannot tell us how something can be made out of nothing. God apparently did it just that way. And man today cannot tell when this was created.

When we compare the Genesis record with other creation accounts, the contrasts are striking indeed. Most nations have a legend of creation, and probably all of them are corruptions of the Genesis account. For example, we find one of the best accounts of a secular nation in the Babylonian tablets of creation. Notice some of the contrasts: The Babylonian tablets begin with chaos. The Bible account begins with cosmos, with perfection. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." According to the Babylonian account, the heavenly bodies are gods, but they are nothing in the world but matter according to the Bible. There is a polytheistic theology in the Babylonian account but a monotheistic truth in the Bible account. The Babylonian account says the universe is just the work of a craftsman, but the Bible says that God spoke and it came into existence. The Babylonian account is characterized by its puerility and grotesqueness, whereas the Bible presents grand and solemn realities of the Creator God who is holy and who is a Savior. The Babylonian account is definitely out of harmony with known science, but the Bible is in accord with true science.

I reject evolution because it rejects God and it rejects revelation. It denies the fall of man and the fact of sin, and it opposes the virgin birth of Christ. Therefore, I reject it with all my being. I do not believe that it is the answer to the origin of this universe.

There are three essential areas into which evolution cannot move and which evolution cannot solve. It cannot bridge the gap from nothing to something. It cannot bridge the gap from something to life. It cannot bridge the gap between life and humanity -- that is, self-conscious human life with a free will.

The press, of course, is always looking for something sensational and comes up with interesting findings. One of the things which has been put in my hands is a clipping from a fellow Texan. They have found near Glenrose, Texas, down near a place where I used to live, the tracks of dinosaurs. Now, I've known about that for years. You might expect that in Texas they would find the biggest of everything, and apparently the dinosaurs were there. But now they have found something that is quite disturbing: they have found some giant human tracks in the same place. You know, that's really upsetting because it is very difficult to start out with a little amoeba or a little scum on top of the water and then find that walking back there with the dinosaurs were human beings who were much bigger than any of us today. Evolution is going to have a lot of problems in the next few years. May I predict (and I am merely echoing a prediction of a scientist) that by the end of this century the theory of evolution will be as dead as a dodo bird.

While there is a great deal more that could be said on these issues, there is a third question that arises. Not only are folk asking who created and when did He create but also why did He create. Believe me, this gets right down to the nitty-gritty. This is very important.

The Word of God tells us that this universe was created for His own pleasure. He saw fit to create it; He delighted in it. In the final book of the Bible we find these words: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" ([Rev. 4:11](#)). He created this universe because He wanted to create it. He did it for His pleasure. You may not like the universe, but He does. He never asked me about where I wanted this little world on which I live to be located in His universe. In fact, He didn't even ask me whether I wanted to be born in Texas or not. Of course, if He had given me the opportunity, I would have chosen Texas. But He didn't give me that choice. May I say to you that this universe was created for His pleasure. He saw fit to create and He delighted in the act.

The second reason that He created this universe was for His own glory. The original creation, you remember, sang that wonderful Creator's praise ". . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" ([Job 38:7](#)). It was created for His glory. And in the prophecy of Isaiah are these words: ". . . I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" ([Isa. 43:7](#)). God created this universe for His own glory.

The Word of God also tells us that God created man in this universe for fellowship. He wanted to have fellowship with mankind, and so He created him a free moral agent. God could have made a bunch of robots. God could have made mechanical men and pushed a button to make them bow down to Him. But God didn't want that kind of a man. God wanted a man to be free to choose Him and to love Him and to serve Him.

My friend, in the midst of all the unbelief, the blasphemy, and the hostility toward God which is around us today, the greatest thing you can do as a human being is to publicly choose the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth and to receive His Son, Jesus Christ, is the most glorious privilege that you and I have. We hear a lot of talk about freedom of speech and freedom of every sort, but this poor crowd around us who talks so loudly of freedom doesn't seem to know what freedom really is. We have real freedom when we choose Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Now let's return to the first verse of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This is a majestic verse. It is a tremendous verse. I am of the opinion that it is the doorway through which you will have to walk into the Bible. You have to believe that God is the Creator, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

"In the beginning" -- that is a beginning which you cannot date. You can estimate it as billions of years, and I think you would be accurate, but who knows how many? Certainly man does not know.

"God created." The word "create" is from the Hebrew word bara, which means to create out of nothing. This word is used only three times in the first chapter of Genesis, because it records only three acts of creation. (1) The creation of something from nothing: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (2) The creation of life: "And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth . . ." ([v. 21](#)). That's animal life of all kinds. (3) The creation of man: "So God created man in his own image . . ." ([v. 27](#)). Theistic evolution is not the answer. It attempts to follow creation until the time of man,

then considers Adam and Eve to be products of some evolutionary process. The theistic evolutionist considers the days in Genesis as periods of time, long periods of time. I do not believe that is true. God's marking off the creative days with the words, "And the evening and the morning were the first day," etc., makes it clear that He was not referring to long periods of time but to actual twenty-four hour days.

"God created the heaven and the earth." The earth is separated from the rest of creation. Why? Well, the earth is the hometown of mankind; that's where he is to be placed. We are very much interested in him because we belong to this creature. We need to realize, my friend, that you and I are creatures, creatures of God, and as creatures of God, we owe Him something.

It was years ago that Herbert Spencer said, "The most general forms into which the manifestation of the Unknowable are re-divisible are time, space, matter, force, motion." Those were his categories of division. A very fine personal worker, George Dewey Blomgren, was talking to an army sergeant who was a law graduate. Mr. Blomgren was attempting to witness to him. The sergeant mentioned Herbert Spencer, so Mr. Blomgren replied, "Did you know that both the Bible and Spencer teach the great principle of creation?" The sergeant's eyes widened and he asked, "How's that?" The reply was, "Spencer talked about time, space, matter, force, motion. In the first two verses of Genesis we find: 'In the beginning [time] God created the heaven [space] and the earth [matter]. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God [force] moved [motion] upon the face of the waters.' It took Spencer fifty years to uncover this law, but here it is in fifty seconds." The sergeant had no grounds for argument and soon trusted Christ as his Savior.

It is very interesting that God has put down these great principles in the first two verses of Genesis. How important it is for us to see that.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters [[Gen. 1:2](#)].

Although this view has been discredited by many in the past few years, I believe that a great catastrophe took place between [verses 1](#) and 2. As far as I can see, there is an abundance of evidence for it. To begin with, look out upon this vast creation -- something has happened to it! Man's trip to the moon reveals nothing in the world but a wasteland up there. How did it get that way? May I say that there came a catastrophe in God's universe.

That is specifically mentioned in regard to the earth because this is to be the place where man lives, and so the earth is described as being "without form and void."

"Darkness was upon the face of the deep" indicates the absence of God, of course.

"Without form, and void" is a very interesting expression. "Without form" is the Hebrew word *tohu*, meaning a ruin, vacancy; "void" is the Hebrew word *bohu*, meaning emptiness. Notice this statement in the prophecy of Isaiah: "For thus said the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is

none else" ([Isa. 45:18](#)). Here God says that He did not create the earth "in vain," and the Hebrew word is *tohu*, which is the same word we found in [Genesis 1:2](#). God did not create the earth without form and void. God created this universe a cosmos, not a chaos. This is the thing which Isaiah is attempting to make clear. He created it not *tohu va bohu*, but the earth became *tohu va bohu*. God formed the earth to be inhabited, and it was God who came to this wreck and made it a habitable place for mankind.

Our current study and exploration of space has revealed, so far, that you and I live in a universe in which only the earth is habitable for human beings. I believe that Genesis is telling us that this earth became without form and void, that it was just as uninhabitable as the moon when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

I believe that the entire universe came under this great catastrophe. What was the catastrophe? We can only suggest that there was some pre-Adamic creature that was on this earth. And it seems that all of this is connected with the fall of Lucifer, son of the morning, who became Satan, the Devil, as we know him today. I think all of this is involved here, but God has not given us details. The fact of the matter is that He has given us very, very few details in the first chapter of Genesis.

"And the spirit of God moved." The word for "moved" means brooded, like a mother hen broods over her little chicks. He brooded upon the face of the waters. The Holy Spirit began a ministry here which we will find Him doing again and again. It is re-creation! He comes into this scene and He recreates. This is precisely what He does for us.

You will remember that the Lord Jesus said, ". . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" ([John 3:5](#)). The water is the Word of God. Now, if you want to make baptism the symbol for it, that's fine. But the water means the Word of God. And the Holy Spirit is the Author of it. This is very important for us to see.

Construction Of The Earth (1:1-2)

We have seen the construction of the universe in [verse 1](#), the convulsion of the earth in [verse 2](#), and now we come to the construction of the earth in six days ([vv. 3-31](#)). I believe what we have here is this development.

There are several things here that I would like to call to your attention. In [Exodus 20:11](#), it reads "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is. . . ." There is nothing in that verse about creating. It says "made"; God is taking that which is already formed and in these six days He is not "creating" but He is recreating. He is working with matter which already exists, out of the matter which He had called into existence probably billions of years before.

God created life and put it on the earth, and for the earth He created man. That is the creature we are interested in because you and I happen to be one of those creatures. This makes the Genesis record intensely important for us today.

Day One -- Light (1:3-5)

[And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.](#)

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
And the evening and the morning were the first day [[Gen. 1:3-5](#)].

That must have been a twenty-four hour day -- I don't see how you could get anything else out of it. Notice that God said, "Let there be light." Ten times in this chapter we will find "let there be" -- let there be a firmament, let there be lights, let the waters be gathered together, etc. Someone has called these the ten commandments of creation. This is the divine decalogue that we find here.

"God said, Let there be light." This is the first time we are told that God spoke. These are His first words recorded in Scripture.

Day Two -- Air Spaces (1:6-8)

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters,
and let it divide the waters from the waters [[Gen. 1:6](#)].

"God said, Let there be a firmament" -- the Hebrew word for firmament is *raqia*, meaning air spaces.

"Let it divide the waters from the waters." What does that mean? Well, God first divided the waters perpendicularly. There is water above us and water beneath us.

And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were
under the firmament from the waters which were above the
firmament: and it was so [[Gen. 1:7](#)].

Out in the Hawaiian Islands, when we were there one year, five inches of rain fell in Honolulu in just a very short time -- I started to say in a few minutes and I think I'm accurate in that. We were in a place where over two hundred inches of rain fall in a year. My friend, there is a whole lot of water up there if two hundred inches of it can fall! Well, that's what God did. He divided the waters above from the waters which are beneath.

And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the
morning were the second day [[Gen. 1:8](#)].

"God called the firmament Heaven." This is not heaven as you and I think of it. Actually, there are three heavens that are mentioned in Scripture. The Lord Jesus spoke of the birds of heaven, and I think that is the heaven mentioned in this verse. Then there are the stars of heaven, meaning the second heaven, and there is the third heaven where God dwells. So the first layer up there, the first deck, is the deck where the clouds are and where the birds fly.

Day Three -- Dry Land And Plant Life (1:9-13)

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered
together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was
so.

And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good [[Gen. 1:9-10](#)].

Now there is a horizontal division made of the waters. First the waters above were separated from the waters beneath. Now the water is separated from the land, from the earth. May I say to you, there is nothing unscientific about this. They tell us that every spot on topside of this earth on which we live today was covered with water at one time. That was evidently a judgment that had come upon the earth way back sometime in the distant eternity of the past, and we know practically nothing about it. Anything we say is speculation. God has really told us very little here. But He has told us enough so that we can believe Him, that's all.

"God called the dry land Earth." What is He getting ready to do? Well, it looks like He is getting ready to make a place where He can put man, a place that is habitable. Man is not a water creature, even though there are evolutionists who think we came from the sea and from seaweed, as we mentioned, and others who think we came out of a slop bucket! How absurd can they possibly be?

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so [[Gen. 1:11](#)].

Now God is putting plant life here because man, until the Flood, was a vegetarian. Man will eat nothing but fruit and nuts. The forming of the plant life completed the third day.

And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

And the evening and the morning were the third day [[Gen. 1:12-13](#)].

Day Four -- Sun, Moon, Stars Appear (1:14-19)

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years [[Gen. 1:14](#)].

God didn't create the sun and the moon at this time. They were already up there. God just brought them around into position.

And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also [[Gen. 1:15-16](#)].

One of them was to take charge of the day, and the sun does that pretty well. Also the moon does a good job by night. I don't know about you, but I proposed to my wife by moonlight. That moon has a lot of influence over the night, I can assure you.

Then there is just a little clause, "He made the stars also." That was a pretty big job, by the way, but not for God. It was John Wesley who said, "God created the heavens and the earth and didn't even half try." God "made the stars also."

And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good [[Gen. 1:17-18](#)].

You will notice that it is God who does the dividing here, "to divide the light from the darkness."

You know, He still does that! There are those today who ask, "What's the difference between right and wrong?" God has drawn all the lines. How can we know what is right? God says what is right. God has put down certain principles. God divides the light from the darkness and there is just that much distinction between right and wrong. He is the One who makes the difference, and He still does it.

And the evening and the morning were the fourth day [[Gen. 1:19](#)].

Day Five -- Animal Life (1:20-23)

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven [[Gen. 1:20](#)].

We do have a certain amount of development. This does not mean that everything came from one little cell but that God made one of each creature and there has been development from each one. God said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly," and the next verse adds "after their kind." The word "kind" does not mean species, as even Darwin said, but it means more than that. The word is phylum. I have been reading that one scientist said he had been looking around for another word. Well, I had a professor in seminary, a very brilliant man, who gave phylum as a synonym for "kind." If you will look up that word in the dictionary, you will see that it means a direct line of descent within a group. For instance, it would include not just one horse but every animal in the horse family. God created one like that, and there has been development from each one, tremendous development. Also there has been devolution -- that is, there has been development, then later there has been degeneration.

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good [[Gen. 1:21](#)].

"And God saw that it was good." Notice that. When God does it, it's good.

And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth [[Gen. 1:22](#)].

By the way, one scientist I quoted previously said that if our schools teach the creation story, they might as well teach the stork story. Believe me, the Bible certainly gets rid of

the stork story. If you read it carefully, you will notice that these animals had to "bring forth." This will be true of mankind also. You won't find little Willie under a stump, and the stork won't bring little Susie, either.

And the evening and the morning were the fifth day [[Gen. 1:23](#)].

Day Six -- Fertility Of Animal Life (1:24-25)

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good [[Gen. 1:24-25](#)].

Notice again the expression "after his kind" -- after his biological phylum. Now we will see that God separates plant life and animal life from mankind, and He says, "Let us make man in our image." This creature is of great interest to you because he happens to be your great-great, etc., grandfather, and he is mine, also. This means that you and I are cousins, although maybe not kissing cousins. But the whole human family is related.

Creation Of Man (1:26-31)

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth [[Gen. 1:26](#)].

The first question that arises is: How was man created? The next chapter will tell us that. "And let them have dominion." God gave him dominion over the earth, and I do not think this means that God made him a sort of glorified gardener of the Garden of Eden. Adam had tremendous authority given to him. We will find out a little later that God says to him that he is to do certain things relative to this creation that God has given to him.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them [[Gen. 1:27](#)].

We have here just the simple fact of the creation of man. This is the third time we find the word bara, which means to create out of nothing. So we see that man is created; he is something new. Bara is the same word that occurred in the first verse of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." He created the physical universe. Then He created life: "And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth . . ." ([Gen. 1:21](#)). Now we see that God created man: "So God created man in his own image." God will give us the details of His creation of man in the next chapter, and we can see from this that God has left out a great deal about the creation of the universe. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" is all the information He has given to us, and it's about all we can know about it. He could have filled in details, but He didn't. He will go into more detail about only one act of His creation, and that is His creation of man. Do you know why? It is because this record was written for man; God wants him to know about his origin. It is as if God were saying, "I would like very much

for you to pay attention to your own creation and not be speculating about the creation of the universe." This verse tells us something tremendous.

"So God created man in his own image." I want to submit to you that this is one of the great statements of the Word of God. I cannot conceive of anything quite as wonderful as this. What does it mean? Well, man is like God, I think, as a trinity. Immediately someone is going to say, "Oh, I know what you mean. You mean that man is physically and mentally and spiritually a being." Yes, I believe that is true. Paul, in [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#), says that very thing: ". . . And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Although this is true, we will see when we get into the next chapter that it actually means more than that. I think that it refers to the fact that man is a personality, and as a personality he is self-conscious, and he is one who makes his own decisions. He is a free moral agent. Apparently that is the thing which is unique about mankind. I believe this is what is meant by God creating man in His own image.

"Male and female created he them." These verses do not give to us the details of how man was created and how woman was created. We won't find that until we come to the second chapter. That is the reason that I say that God did not intend to give us the details concerning the creation of this great universe that we are in or He would have given us another chapter relative to that. But He offers no explanation other than He is the Creator. This puts us right back to the all-important truth which we find in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" ([Heb. 11:3](#)). Things we see today were made out of things which did not even exist before. The creation was made ex nihilo, out of nothing. Somebody says, "Explain that." My friend, I can't explain it. And evolution doesn't explain it either. Evolution has never answered the question of how nothing becomes something. It always starts with a little amoeba, or with a garbage can, or with a little piece of seaweed, or with an animal up in a tree. Our minds must have something to start with, but the Bible starts with nothing. God created! This is the tremendous revelation of this chapter.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth [[Gen. 1:28](#)].

We see here that God has given to this creature something unusual. First He says to man, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." We will hear Him repeat that when He creates woman. God seems to be the One who introduced the subject of sex. It is quite interesting that our generation thinks that they have made a new discovery, that they are the Columbus that discovered sex. God mentions it here at the very beginning. In fact, there are four methods that God has used to get mankind into this universe. One was by direct creation, which produced Adam. A second way was by indirect creation, which produced Eve. The third was by the virgin birth, and this was how Jesus Christ came into the human family. The fourth way is by natural generation, and that is pretty well known in our day.

We have certainly dragged natural generation down to a level that God never intended for it. God created man to reproduce. This is a wonderful, glorious truth, and it is not to be made into a dirty, filthy, slimy thing as man is doing now. People are writing dirty, filthy books and calling it literature; they are producing dirty, filthy things and calling it art. Some of the critics are beginning to speak out against this, and we thank the Lord for that. They are saying what I have long contended, that much of what is called art is revolting and repulsive and that it is not art at all. It is nothing in the world but obscene, and it is done simply for the almighty dollar. God never intended for sex to be abused in this way.

God created this man in His image. God is the essentially personal Being, and in giving the man an immortal soul, He gave him also a true personality. Man has a self-consciousness, he has the power of free choice, and he has a distinct moral responsibility. He is in the image of God.

"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." God tells man to fill the earth by reproduction. And notice that He uses the word "replenish." That is an interesting word and seems to indicate that this earth had been inhabited before by other creatures. Whatever the creatures were, they had disappeared before man was created.

God also tells man to "subdue" the earth. This, I think, is the basis of learning and of scientific exploration in our day. One of the Proverbs says this: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" ([Prov. 25:2](#)).

God hides diamonds way down in the earth and God also puts the treasures down where man has to dig for them, and I believe that today the same thing is true about knowledge. I think it is true about the study of the Word of God. God wants us to go into the laboratory to use the test tube and the microscope, but unfortunately man comes out with an atom bomb, and he is trying to destroy the human family in our day.

"And have dominion" is God's instruction to man. Adam was not just a gardener to cut the grass. Man was created to rule this earth. I think that Adam could control the weather just as we control the air-conditioning in our homes. He ruled this earth. This is what we see in the Lord Jesus. When He was here on this earth, He had control over nature. He could say to a storm, "Be still." He could feed a multitude with five loaves and two fishes. It is my opinion that Adam could have done all of that until his fall. At the Fall he lost the dominion that God had given him.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat [[Gen. 1:29](#)].

From this statement I assume that man was a vegetarian at first, and not until after the Flood did man become a meat eater.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day [[Gen. 1:30-31](#)].

This brings us to the end of chapter one, and it might be well to make a resumé at this point. What are some of the things we should note here? Well, one of these things is the fact that God is mentioned here thirty-two times. The Bible makes no attempt to prove that there is a God. Why not? Because He says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God . . ." ([Ps. 14:1](#)).

The Bible is a Book written to reveal the spiritual, the religious, the redemptive truth, and that comes to us only by faith. So we have here the fact that God is the One who created.

In this first chapter we see the unity and power and personality of God. This is exactly what Paul wrote in [Romans 1:20](#): "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen." How are they clearly seen? "Being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." I say to you very candidly that God has shut you up to faith in Himself.

We will notice some other truths in this chapter. It denies polytheism: One God creates. Secondly, it denies the eternity of matter. The first words are: "In the beginning" -- and it all had a beginning, my friend. This is true in spite of the fact that there was a time when science taught the eternity of matter. Thirdly, this chapter denies pantheism. God is before all things and He is apart from them. Fourthly, it denies fatalism -- God acts in the freedom of His will.

Finally, let me enumerate the striking features in chapter 1:

- (1) Order
- (2) Progress
- (3) Promptness
- (4) Perfection

Chapter 2

THEME: The Sabbath Day; summary of the first five days of the restoration; man's creation; condition placed on man; woman's creation

Agreat principle of revelation occurs for the first time in this chapter, but it will be found again and again in the Word of God. It is one of the fingerprints of inspiration. It is the law of recurrence or the law of recapitulation. In other words, the Spirit of God, in giving the Word of God, has a practice of stating briefly a series of great facts and truths; then He will come back and take out of the series that which is all-important, and He will elucidate and enlarge upon that particular thing. He is going to do this now in chapter 2 with the six days of creation which were given in chapter 1. This same principle is seen in the Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is the interpretation of the Law after forty years of experience with it in the wilderness. Deuteronomy is not just a repetition of the Law, but rather an interpretation of it. Likewise, we are given not only one but four Gospels. Again and again, this procedure is followed throughout the Word of God.

The Sabbath Day (2:1-3)

In chapter 2 that which is lifted out of the six days of creation is that which pertains to man, and we begin with the Sabbath Day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made [[Gen. 2:1-3](#)].

Do not miss the importance of the Sabbath Day. What does it mean when it says that God rested from His work? Does it mean that God got tired, sat down to rest on the seventh day, and said that he had had a big week -- that He had worked more than forty hours, and that He wanted to rest? If you look at it like that, it is perfect nonsense. God rested from His work. When God finished His six days of work, He looked upon it and it was very good, and there was nothing else to do. Every time I leave my office for the day, I still have work all over my desk. I have never been able to sit down and say, "I'm through. I've finished it." But God did. At the end of six days, He rested the seventh day because His work was complete. This is one of the greatest spiritual truths there is. The Book of Hebrews tells us that as believers we enter into "rest" -- that is, we enter into His sabbath; we enter into His perfect redemption. He died on the Cross nineteen hundred years ago for you and me, and He offers us a redemption that we can enter into. Thus Paul can write: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Rom. 5:1](#)). I do not even have to lift my little finger in order to be saved -- Jesus did it all.

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.
-- Mrs. H. M. Hall

Summary Of The First Five Days Of Restoration (2:4-6)

Apparently, this vast universe we live in had been here for billions of years, but something happened to the earth and to a great deal of the creation. As a result, God moved in, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep, and there was brought cosmos out of chaos.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens [[Gen. 2:4](#)].

Actually, the word "generations" means families. The Book of Genesis is not only the book of beginnings but also the book of the families. "These are the families of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens."

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground [[Gen. 2:5-6](#)].

All this was here long before man was here upon the earth, and we can now begin to discover the purpose of God in chapter 1. In chapter 1 God was preparing a home for the man whom He would make. God is now getting ready to move this man into a place that He has prepared for him.

Man's Creation (2:7-15)

In the first chapter we saw that there was nothing, and then the inorganic came into existence: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The next step in creation was the organic, that is, the creation of life. We saw that in [verse 21](#) where it says that God created great whales and then all animal life. He created animal life, but apparently the plant life had not been destroyed, and at the time of the re-creation, the seed was already in the earth. I would not want to be dogmatic, but this would seem to be the implication here. God has told us very little in this regard. Then man is the next step in the creation. There is actually no natural transition, and evolution cannot bridge the gap that brings us to the appearance of Homo sapiens on the earth. The earth, therefore, was prepared for the coming of man.

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul [[Gen. 2:7](#)].

This is the method of the creation of man, and again we are limited in what God has told us. Physically, man was taken out of the ground. It is quite interesting that our bodies are made up of about fifteen or sixteen chemical elements. Those same chemical elements are in the ground. The physical part of man was taken out of the dust of the ground. If we were to be boiled down into the separate chemical elements of which we are made, we would be worth very little in terms of money. I used to say \$2.98, but inflation has increased that figure a little. That is the extent of our bodily worth because we were made out of the dust of the ground.

But man is more than dust. Physically, dust he is and to the dust he will return, but his spirit is going to God. Why? Because God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." God breathed into him "the breath of life." God gave man life which is physical or psychological, and then He gave him life which is spiritual. In other words, man now is brought into a marvelous relationship with his Creator. He has in his being a capacity for God. This is what separates man from all other creatures that are found in God's universe, as far as we know. Of course, there are the angels, but we know very little about them.

The theistic evolutionists say that mankind evolved up to this point, and then God began to work with this product of evolution. However, no form of evolutionary theory can account for human speech, it cannot account for human conscience, and it cannot account

for human individuality. These are three things with which evolution has a little difficulty. It is mighty easy to take the bones of a man and compare them to the bones of some anthropoid, probably an ape, or to a horse. There is a striking similarity, I am sure, and yet there is a wide divergence also. I would expect that there would be a certain similarity because these creatures are to move in the same environment in which we move as human beings -- naturally, the chassis would have to be the same. For example, there is a very striking similarity between the chassis of a Ford automobile and that of a Chevrolet automobile, but you had better not say that to the Ford Motor Company or to General Motors! They will tell you that there is a wide difference between the two. But there is a very striking similarity when you see the chassis. You must begin with something fixed on which you can put four wheels, one on each corner, and it must be rectangular to a certain extent. Why? Because the Ford and the Chevrolet are both going to get stuck on the freeway at five o'clock in the afternoon. A car must be able to balance, and it must have a motor to move it. So you would have a similarity, but that does not mean they came out of the same factory. I feel that such an exaggeration has been made of the similarity between man and these other creatures. Man is a different creature. God breathed into his breathing places the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Man is fearfully and wonderfully made, and that is something which we need to keep in mind.

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed [[Gen. 2:8](#)].

I cannot tell you where the Garden of Eden is. I am sure it is somewhere in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley; in fact it may be the entire valley. Originally, that valley was a very fertile place, and it still is, for that matter. It is part of "the fertile crescent." At one time, the peoples inhabiting that region did not even plant grain there; they simply harvested it, for it grew by itself. It is probable that this area will someday become the very center of the earth again.

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil [[Gen. 2:9](#)].

These are unusual trees that are mentioned specifically, the "tree of life" and the "tree of knowledge of good and evil." I cannot tell you much about them because they are not around today; they have been removed from the scene.

The Lord God made "to grow every tree," and the trees, you will notice, were pleasant to look at and were also good for food. There was the beauty of them and the practical side of them; both were combined in them. Perhaps it can be compared to going into a furniture store and having the salesman say, "This article of furniture is very beautiful, but it's also very functional." That was the important thing in the Garden of Eden -- they had some beautiful trees, but they were also functional. In fact, they were very practical -- they were good for food. On this earth on which we live, we still see something of its beauty. In spite of the curse of the fall of man which is upon the earth -- the fact that it brings forth the thorn and the thistle -- there is still a beauty here. I remember the first time I visited the place called Hana on the island of Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. It is difficult to get there, but as we drove down that road, I had never been in such fabulous,

fantastic, and wonderful foliage in my life. It is beyond description. We made a certain turn and came upon a very scenic spot. We could look down that coast and see a little peninsula protruding. There were the coconut trees, the papaya trees, the hibiscus, the bananas, the bamboo; and among the coconut trees a little church stood which the missionaries had started. We just could not help but be startled by its beauty. In fact, so much so that as we stood there, I asked the tour group with me to pause and bow their heads in prayer, and a member of our party led us in prayer. We were just privileged to see that spot. My, the Garden of Eden must have been a beautiful place!

And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold:

And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates [[Gen. 2:10-14](#)].

The river in Ethiopia would be the Nile, and the Hiddekel would be the Tigris.

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it [[Gen. 2:15](#)].

This man had dominion, and the forces of nature responded at his beck and call.

Condition Placed On Man (2:16-20)

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die [[Gen. 2:16-17](#)].

It was not God's original intention for man to die, but man is now put on probation. You see, man has a free will, and privilege always creates responsibility. This is an axiomatic statement that is true. This man who is given a free will must be given a test to determine whether he will obey God or not.

Some expositors suggest that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was poison. On the contrary, I think it was the best fruit in the garden.

"For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Remember that man is a trinity, and he would have to die in a threefold way. Adam did not die physically until over nine hundred years after this, but God said, "In the day you eat, you shall die." Death means separation, and Adam was separated from God spiritually the very day he ate, you may be sure of that.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him [[Gen. 2:18](#)].

There is a purpose in God's putting man in the garden alone for a period of time. It was to show him that he had a need, that he needed someone to be with him.

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof [[Gen. 2:19](#)].

Believe me, that man had to be a smart man to name all the animals. Some wag has said that when God brought an elephant to Adam and said, "What shall we call this one?" Adam said, "Well, he looks more like an elephant than anything else." And I guess he did!

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him [[Gen. 2:20](#)].

"An help for him" -- (the word meet should not be here) -- that is, one agreeing and answering to him, a helper as his counterpart, the other half of him. A man is but half a man until he is married, and that is very important to see. I am not here to promote marriage, and yet I would say that it is God's intention for both man and woman. The woman is to answer to the man.

Woman's Creation (2:21-25)

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man [[Gen. 2:21-22](#)].

The woman is taken from Adam, from the side of Adam. Dr. Matthew Henry said that God didn't take her from the head to be his superior, or from his foot to be his inferior, but He took her from his side to be equal with him, to be along with him. That is exactly the purpose: she is to be the other half of man. This is exactly what God meant when He said, "Wives, submit to your husbands." He means that she is to respond, to answer to him. A wife is the other part of him, the other half of him. He is only half a man without her.

Believe me, Eve was beautiful. Any woman today who is beautiful inherited it originally from mother Eve. There is no beauty that she did not have. She was a doll, let me tell you! And she was the other half of Adam.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man [[Gen. 2:23](#)].

The word for "Woman" in the Hebrew language is very similar to the word for "Man." The word for man is ish, and the word for woman is ishshah. She is the other part of man

and is to answer to him. God intended man to take the lead -- He created him first -- and He created woman to follow. The man is the aggressor -- God made him that way even physically -- and woman is the responder.

Do not tell me that a wife has to love her husband. God does not say that. God says that she is to respond to him. If he says to her, "I love you," then she is going to say right back to him, "I love you." When a man tells me, "My wife is very cold," that is a dead giveaway that he is not really the kind of husband he should be. If he is the right kind of husband, she will respond, because he is the one to take the lead.

Therefore shall man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh [[Gen. 2:24](#)].

In other words, the man is now subject to his wife in the sense that he is responsible for her, and he is no longer under the control of his father and mother.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed [[Gen. 2:25](#)].

Although the Scriptures do not say so, I believe they were clothed with some sort of glory light. May I say, I think that this is the loveliest and the most precious account of the creation of woman and man. Here is a couple whom God really joined together. There are certain things which God has given to His people that they should obey, and God has given to the human race marriage. Marriage is one of the bands which modern men are trying to throw off: "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" ([Ps. 2:3](#)). What is man trying to do? He is trying to get rid of God, because God is the One who established marriage.

The creation of woman was indirect creation, for God took her out of man to reveal the fact that she is part of man. Someone has put it like this: "For woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse, not like to like, but like in difference. Yet in the long years, 'liker' must they grow, till at the last she set herself to man like perfect music unto noble words, distinct in individualities, but like each other even as those who love." The story of creation of woman for man is one of the most beautiful stories.

The subjects of this chapter are quite wonderful: the creation of man, where he is placed, his occupation, the condition upon which he is there with a responsibility, his need for a companion, and then God's creation of woman. There is to be an identity between the husband and the wife, and God says, "Husbands, love your wives." This is the creation story.

The man who was the chaplain at Nuremberg Prison and dealt with men who had been Nazi chiefs has written of his experiences. Speaking of his last interview with Herman Goering, one of the very few who refused to accept Christ, Chaplain Gerecke says, "That evening, around [8:30](#) I had a long session with Goering -- during which he made sport of the story of creation, ridiculed divine inspiration of the Scriptures and made outright denial of certain Christian fundamentals." Less than two hours later he committed suicide. My friend, one of the ways to get rid of the alarming suicide rate is to let men and women know they are creatures of God who are responsible to their Creator. How important this is!

We have seen in chapter 2 man's kinship with God, man's worship of God, man's fellowship with God, man's service to God, man's loyalty to God, man's authority from God, and man's social life from and for God. This is the great message of this chapter.

Chapter 3

THEME: The serpent denies the Word of God; the man and woman disobey the Word of God; the design of God for the future; the doctrine of redemption introduced

We come now to what some consider to be the most important chapter of the Bible. It is conceded, I believe, by all conservative expositors to be just that. Dr. Griffith Thomas called chapter 3 the pivot of the Bible. If you doubt that, read chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis, omit chapter 3, and then read chapters 4 -- 11. You will find that there is a tremendous vacuum that needs to be filled, that something has happened. For instance, in [Genesis 1](#) and 2, we find man in innocence; everything is perfection, and there is fellowship between God and man. But the minute you begin with chapter 4 of Genesis and read just as far as chapter 11, you find jealousy, anger, murder, lying, wickedness, corruption, rebellion, and judgment. The question is: Where did it all come from? Where did it begin? Where did the sin originate? Actually, I do not think it originated in chapter 3 of Genesis, but as far as man is concerned, here is where it began.

Let me quote for you the statement of another concerning chapter 3:

"Here we trace back to their source many of the rivers of divine truth. Here commences the great drama which is being enacted on the stage of human history and which well nigh 6,000 years has not yet completed. Here we find the divine explanation of the present fallen and ruined condition of our race. Here we learn of the subtle devices of our enemy, the devil. Here we behold the utter powerlessness of man to walk in the path of righteousness when divine grace is withheld from him. Here we discover the spiritual effects of sin, man seeking to flee from God. Here we discern the attitude of God toward the guilty sinner. Here we mark the universal tendency of human nature to cover its own moral shame by a device of man's own handiwork. Here we are taught of the gracious provision which God has made to meet our great need. Here begins that marvelous stream of prophecy which runs all through the Holy Scriptures. Here we learn that man cannot approach God except through a mediator."

The Serpent Casts A Shadow Of Doubt On The Word Of God (3:1-3)

In this first section we have the setting for the temptation of man.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? [[Gen. 3:1](#)].

The question arises: Why the temptation? If we go back to chapters 1 and 2, we find that man was created innocent, but man was not created righteous. What is righteousness? Righteousness is innocence that has been maintained in the presence of temptation. You see, temptation will either develop you or destroy you; it will do one of the two. The

Garden of Eden was not a hothouse, and man was not a hothouse plant. Character must be developed, and it can only be developed in the presence of temptation. Man was created a responsible being, and he was responsible to glorify, to obey, to serve, and to be subject to divine government.

Man did not create himself -- I do not think anyone claims that -- but God created him. And God was not arbitrary in the condition which He laid down. He said to man, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" ([Gen. 2:17](#)). That tree was not the only tree in the garden to eat of. It would have been very arbitrary if man would have starved to death if he had not been able to eat of the tree and if he had also been told he would die if he did eat of it. There was an abundance of trees in the garden which bore fruit; so that man did not need to eat of this tree at all. Therefore, we find that man appears on the scene a responsible creature.

In this first verse we are introduced to the serpent. Immediately the question can reasonably be asked, "Where in the world did he come from? How did he get into the Garden of Eden?" As far as I can tell from the Word of God, the serpent was not there as a slithering creature. Actually, we are not told how he came there; we are just told he was there. The Word of God leaves a great deal out. The serpent was a creature that could be used of Satan, and Satan used him. Isn't that exactly the method that Satan uses today? Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" ([2Cor. 11:14](#)). The Book of Revelation says more about Satan than anywhere else in Scripture. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" ([Rev. 12:9](#)). This creature was not a slithering snake as we think of it today. That is not the picture that the Word of God gives of him at all. "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years" ([Rev. 20:2](#)).

This is a creature with tremendous ability. There is no record of his origin here in Genesis at all. I believe that [Isaiah 14](#) and [Ezekiel 28](#) give us the origin of this creature and also how he became the creature that he was.

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die [[Gen. 3:2-3](#)].

Why in the world did the serpent approach the woman? Why didn't he approach the man? When God created Adam, He had told him that he could eat of every tree of the garden, but of this one he was not to eat. Woman was created last, and she had gotten her information secondhand; she had gotten it from man. And so the serpent approached woman first. Frankly, I think that woman was created finer than man; that is, she had more compassion and sympathy in her makeup. She was probably more open to suggestion than the man. Actually, I think a woman has a nature that is more inquisitive than a man's. She is the one today who goes into the cults and isms more than anyone else

and leads men into them. In fact, many of the founders of cults and isms have been women.

Satan knew what he was doing. Notice what he did. He had a very subtle method as he came. He asked her this question, which cast doubt on the Word of God, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" He raises a doubt in her mind and excites her curiosity. She answers, "We can eat of all the trees, but this tree God has told us, 'Ye shall not eat of it [that's all God had said, but she added something], neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'" I do not find where He ever said, "You are not to touch it."

The Serpent Denies The Word Of God (3:4-5)

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil [[Gen. 3:4-5](#)].

Instead of saying, "Ye shall not surely die," what he said in effect was, "Ye certainly shall not die. Why, that is just absolutely impossible!" He questions the love of God and the goodness of God: "If God is good, why did He put this restriction down?" The serpent implies that God is not righteous when he says, "You will not die." And he questions the holiness of God by saying, "You're going to be gods yourselves, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The thing that Eve did was to add to the Word of God. The liberal and the atheist take from the Word of God, and God has warned against that. The cults (and some fundamentalists, by the way) add to the Word of God, and God warns against that. There are those who say that today we are saved by law. They argue, "Yes, it is by faith, but it is faith plus something else" -- and they are apt to come up with anything. The Word of God says: "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" ([John 6:29](#)). How important this is!

The serpent very subtly contradicts God, and he substitutes his word for God's word. The Book of Romans teaches the fact of the obedience of faith. Faith leads to obedience, and unbelief leads to disobedience. Doubt leads to disobedience -- always.

The Man And Woman Disobey The Word Of God (3:6-13)

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat [[Gen. 3:6](#)].

Notice that the appeal the serpent made is quite an interesting one. It was an appeal to the flesh -- "the tree was good for food" -- but that is not all; that is not the thing that is really important. "It was pleasant to the eyes" -- it was an appeal to the psychological part of man, to his mind. "And a tree to be desired to make one wise" -- this is an appeal to the religious side of man.

You will find that this is the exact temptation that Satan brought to the Lord Jesus in the wilderness (see [Matt. 4](#), [Mark 1](#), and [Luke 4](#)). First of all, he said to our Lord, "Make these stones into bread" -- this was the appeal to the flesh, as the tree was good for food. Then Satan showed the Lord the kingdoms of the world and offered them to Him -- that was an appeal to the mind, as the tree was pleasant to the eyes. Then finally he said, "Cast Yourself down from the temple" -- this was an appeal to the religious side of man, as the tree was to be desired to make one wise. I do not think that the Devil has changed his tactics today. He uses the same tactics with you and me, and the reason that he still uses them is that they work. He hasn't needed to change his tactics, for we all seem to fall for the same line.

John wrote: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" ([1John 2:16](#)). "The lust of the flesh" -- that is, the tree was good to eat. "The lust of the eyes" -- the tree was good to look at. "The pride of life" -- the tree was to be desired to make one wise. These things are not of the Father, but of the world. Jesus said that these sins of the flesh come out of the heart of man, way down deep. This is where Satan is making his appeal. This is the method that he is using in order that he might reach in and lead mankind astray. And he succeeded. They were told that they would know good and evil -- and what happened? We now have the results of the fall of man.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons [[Gen. 3:7](#)].

"And the eyes of them both were opened" -- this refers to their conscience. Before the fall, man did not have a conscience; he was innocent. Innocence is ignorance of evil. Man did not make conscience. It is an accuser that each one of us has living on the inside of us. A leading psychologist in a university in Southern California, who is a Christian, said to me that the guilt complex is as much a part of man as his right arm is. Man cannot get rid of that guilt complex in a psychological way.

"And they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Have you ever noticed that the fig tree is the only tree that is specifically mentioned? (The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is not an apple tree. I do not know what it was, but I am almost sure it was not an apple tree.) These fig leaves concealed but did not really cover. Adam and Eve did not confess; they just attempted to cover up their sin. They were not ready to admit their lost condition.

This is the same condition of man today in religion. He goes through exercises and rituals, he joins churches, and he becomes very religious. Have you ever noticed that Christ cursed the fig tree? That is quite interesting. And He denounced religion right after that, by the way; He denounced it with all His being because religion merely covers over sin.

In this temptation Satan wanted to come between man's soul and God. In other words, he wanted to wean man from God, to win man over to himself, and to become the god of man. The temptations of the flesh would not have appealed to man in that day, anyway. He was not tempted to steal or lie or covet. He was just tempted to doubt God. What was

the trouble with the rich young ruler? He did not believe God. In the parable of the tares, the tares are those who would not believe God. Notice Satan's method. First, Eve saw that the tree was good for food; second, it was pleasant to the eye; and third, it was to be desired to make one wise. Satan works from the outside to the inside, from without to within.

On the other hand, God begins with man's heart. Religion is something that you rub on the outside, but God does not begin with religion. May I make a distinction here: Christianity is not a religion; Christianity is Christ. There are a lot of religions, but the Lord Jesus went right to the fountainhead when He said, "Ye must be born again."

He said to the Pharisees who were very religious on the outside, "Make the inside of the platter clean. You are just like a mausoleum, beautiful on the outside with marble and flowers, but inside full of dead men's bones." What a picture! And Adam and Eve, instead of confessing their sin, sewed fig leaves together as a covering. May I say to you, there is really no new style in fig leaves. Men are still going to church and going through religious exercises and good works instead of confessing the sin of their hearts.

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? [[Gen. 3:8-9](#)].

Religion will separate you from God -- and Adam is lost. Adam is lost, and it is God seeking him and not man seeking God.

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat [[Gen. 3:10-12](#)].

Notice that there is no confession on Adam's part. The important thing is not so much that he blamed the woman or, as we would say in the common colloquialism of the day, "he passed the buck," but that there is no confession of sin on his part.

And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat [[Gen. 3:13](#)].

Here is some more of that so-called "buck passing."

The Design Of God For The Future (3:14-19)

This man, this creature that God has made, has now turned aside from God, and God must deal with him and must judge him.

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life [[Gen. 3:14](#)].

The serpent is certainly not the slithering creature that we think of today. He was different at the beginning, and there has now been pronounced upon him this judgment from God. God pronounces a judgment upon Satan which has a tremendous effect upon man. I would urge you to memorize the following verse, for this is one that you certainly ought to know. This verse is the first prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, the Savior, into the world:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel [[Gen. 3:15](#)].

"And I will put enmity between thee [that is, Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it [that is, Christ] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is a tremendous statement that is given to us here. The most prominent thought is not the ultimate victory that would come, but the long-continued struggle. This verse reveals the fact that now there is to be a long struggle between good and evil. This is exactly what you will find in the rest of the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus made this statement in His day concerning this struggle: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" ([John 8:44](#)). "The devil" is Satan. The Lord Jesus Christ made the distinction between children of God and children of Satan. John again mentions this conflict in [1John 3:10](#): "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Thus we have brought before us the fact that here is a conflict, here is a struggle, and here are two seeds in the world. There will be the final victory -- but the long-continued struggle is important to note. Every man must face temptation and must win his battle. Before Christ came, the victory was through obedience in faith. After Christ came, we are to identify ourselves with Christ through faith. What does it mean to be saved? It means to be in Christ.

Man was one of three orders of creation: angels, man, and animals. Animals were given no choice, but man and angels were given a choice. Here you have, if you please, man's choice. He has made a decision, and he is held responsible for the decision that he has made.

Notice that it says "her seed." It does not say the man's seed. Here is at least the suggestion of the virgin birth of Christ. When God went into that garden looking for man, He said, "Where art thou?" Any anthology of religion tells the story of man's search for God. My friend, that is not the way God tells it. Let's tell it like it is: Salvation is God's search for man. Man ran away from Him, and God called to him, "Where art thou?" Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas in his book, *Genesis, A Devotional Commentary*, makes the comment that "it is the call of Divine justice, which cannot overlook sin. It is the call of Divine sorrow, which grieves over the sinner. It is the call of Divine love, which offers

redemption for sin." We have all of that in the verse before us -- the promise of the coming of the Savior.

God's search for man is pictured all the way through Scripture. Paul wrote, ". . . there is none that seeketh after God" ([Rom. 3:11](#)). The Lord Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you . . ." ([John 15:16](#)). And we can say with John, "We love him, because he first loved us" ([1John 4:19](#)). God seeks out man, and He offers man salvation, but there is going to be a long struggle that will take place.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee [[Gen. 3:16](#)].

This is the judgment upon woman. She cannot bring a child into the world without sorrow. Isn't it interesting that that should be true? The very thing that brings joy into the life and continues the human family has to come through sorrow.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast harkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field:

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return [[Gen. 3:17-19](#)].

This is the judgment upon man. Death now comes to man. What is death? Physical death is a separation of the person, the spirit, the soul, from the body. Ecclesiastes says: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" ([Eccl. 12:7](#)). Man ultimately must answer to God. Whether he is saved or lost, he is going to have to answer to God. But Adam did not die physically the day that he ate. He did not die until more than nine hundred years later. The whole point is simply this: he died spiritually the moment he disobeyed; he was separated from God. Death is separation. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians that they were "dead in trespasses and sins," he did not mean that they were dead physically but that they were dead spiritually, separated from God. In that wonderful parable of the prodigal son, our Lord told about this boy who ran away from his father. When he returned, the father said to the elder son, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found . . ." ([Luke 15:24](#)). Dead? Yes, he was dead, not physically, but he was separated from the father. To be separated from the Father means simply that -- it means death. The Lord Jesus said to Martha, ". . . I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" ([John 11:25](#)). Again, "dead" means death spiritually, that is, separation from God. Man died spiritually the moment he ate. That is the reason he ran away from God. That is the reason he sewed fig leaves for a covering.

The Doctrine Of Redemption Introduced (3:20-24)

And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living [[Gen. 3:20](#)].

This does not mean that Cain and Abel were born in the Garden of Eden, but it is definite that they were born after the fall of Adam and Eve.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them [[Gen. 3:21](#)].

In order to have the skins of animals, the animals have to be slain. I believe that this is the origin of sacrifice and that God made it clear to man. God rejected their fig leaves but made them clothing of skins, and when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, they looked back upon a bloody sacrifice. When they looked back, they saw exactly what God had Moses put on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies: two cherubim looking down upon the blood that was there -- and that was the way to God.

There are four great lessons that we see from the fig leaves and the fact that God clothed them with skins. (1) Man must have adequate covering to approach God. You cannot come to God on the basis of your good works. You must come just as you are -- a sinner. (2) Fig leaves are unacceptable; they are homemade. God does not take a homemade garment. (3) God must provide the covering. (4) The covering is obtained only through the death of the Lord Jesus.

Man must have a substitute between himself and God's wrath. That is important even in these days for man to consider. The hardest thing in the world is for man to take his rightful position before God. This anonymous poem on prayer reveals the necessity of this even in our own hearts:

He prayed for strength that he might achieve;
He was made weak that he might obey.
He prayed for health that he might do greater things;
He was given infirmity that he might do better things;
He prayed for riches that he might be happy;
He was given poverty that he might be wise.
He prayed for power that he might have the praise of men;
He was given infirmity that he might feel the need of God.
He prayed for all things that he might enjoy life;
He was given life that he might enjoy all things.
He had received nothing that he asked for -- all that he hoped for;
His prayer was answered -- he was most blessed.

Salvation comes when you and I take our proper place as sinners before God.

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken [[Gen. 3:22-23](#)].

All I can say to this is, thank God that He did not let man live eternally in sin and that God is not going to let us do that. That is really a blessing!

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life [[Gen. 3:24](#)].

This does not mean that God put up a roadblock. It means that the way of life was kept open for man to come to God. But now that way is not through the tree of life. Salvation must come through a sacrifice, and when man looked back, the blood of the sacrifice is what he saw.

Chapter 4

THEME: The birth of Cain and Abel; God gives Cain a second chance; Cain murders Abel; the children of Cain and a godless civilization; the birth of Seth

In [Genesis 3](#) we have the root of sin and in [Genesis 4](#) the fruit of sin. How bad is sin? Well, in this chapter, we find that man was not just suffering from ptomaine poisoning because of having eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Chapter 4 reveals how much had really happened to the man. By his disbelief and his disobedience, he had turned away from God and had sinned in such a way that he brought upon himself and his race His judgment, because you and I are given this same kind of nature. We have the same nature that our father had, and Adam has given all of us a pretty bad nature. All this is revealed in the story of the two sons of Adam and Eve. They had more children than this, but we are given the record of only these two at this time.

The Birth Of Cain And Abel (4:1-5)

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD [[Gen. 4:1](#)].

This reveals the fact that Adam and Eve certainly did not anticipate that the struggle was going to be long. When Cain was born, Eve must have said, "I have gotten the man from the Lord. God said that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent -- and here he is!" But Cain was not the one. He was a murderer, he was no savior at all. It will be a long time before the Savior comes. For a minimum of six thousand years -- and I think it has been longer than that -- the struggle has been going on between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground [[Gen. 4:2](#)].

These are the two boys that we are looking at.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD [[Gen. 4:3](#)].

"In process of time" actually means "at the end of days," which would mean on the Sabbath Day, on the day that God had rested.

"Cain brought" -- the idea of "brought" means to an appointed place. They are bringing an offering to God to an appointed place to worship. All this would indicate that they are doing it by revelation. I know that they are, for when we turn to [Hebrews 11:4](#), we read:

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." How could Abel offer it "by faith"? "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#)). God had to have given His Word about this, or this boy Abel could never have come by faith, and that is the way he came. The other boy did not come that way. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground." There is nothing wrong with the fruit. Don't think that he brought the leftovers -- his attitude is not that of giving old clothes to the mission. I think that the fruit he brought would have won the blue ribbon in any county or state fair in the country. He brought the best of his beautiful, delicious fruit, and he brought it as an offering to the Lord.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell [[Gen. 4:4-5](#)].

Someone may say, "I don't see anything wrong in the thing Cain did." In the eleventh verse of his epistle, speaking of apostates in the last days, Jude says, ". . . They have gone in the way of Cain . . ." What is the way of Cain? When Cain brought an offering to God, he did not come by faith -- he came on his own. And the offering that he brought denied that human nature is evil. God said, "Bring that little blood sacrifice which will point to the Redeemer who is coming into the world. Come on that basis, and don't come by bringing the works of your own hands."

Cain's offering also denied that man was separated from God. He acted like everything was all right. This is what liberalism does today in talking about the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. My friend, things are not all right with us today. We are not born children of God. We have to be born again to be children of God. Man is separated from God. Cain refused to recognize that, and multitudes today refuse to do so.

The third thing that Cain's offering denied was that man cannot offer works to God -- Cain felt he could. Scripture says: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" ([Titus 3:5](#)). The difference between Cain and Abel was not a character difference at all, but the difference was in the offerings which they brought. These two boys had the same background. They had the same heredity. They had the same environment. There was not that difference between them. Don't tell me that Cain got his bad disposition from an alcoholic grandfather on his father's side -- he didn't have a grandfather. And don't say that Abel got his good disposition from a very fine grandmother on his mother's side. They just didn't have grandparents. They had the same heredity and the same environment. The difference was in the offerings.

That offering makes a difference in men today. No Christian takes the position that he is better than anyone else. The thing that makes him a Christian is that he recognizes that he is a sinner like everyone else and that he needs an offering, he needs a sacrifice, and he needs Someone to take his place and to die for him. Paul says of Christ: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood . . ." ([Rom. 3:25](#)). Therefore

Paul could further write: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" ([Rom. 10:3](#)). That is the picture of multitudes of people today. They are attempting through religion, through joining a church and doing something, to make themselves acceptable to God. God's righteousness can only come to you -- because it must be a perfect righteousness -- through Christ's providing it for you. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" ([Rom. 4:25](#)). That is, He was raised for our righteousness. He was the One who took our place. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" ([2Cor. 5:21](#)). Paul says in [Philippians 3:8-9](#), ". . . That I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ. . . ." The righteousness of Cain was his own righteousness. The righteousness of Abel was faith in a sacrifice that looked forward to Christ's sacrifice.

We have seen that Cain and Abel had come together to worship God. These two boys were identical. Some expositors actually believe they were twins -- I think that was the position of the late Dr. Harry Rimmer. But I believe they were even closer than twins because of the fact they had no blood stream which reached way back on both sides that might cause a difference. They were the sons of Adam and Eve. However, there is a great divergence between Cain and Abel which is not necessarily a character divergence. One was accepted because of the sacrifice which he brought by faith; the other, Cain, brought his offering without any recognition from God at all.

God Gives Cain A Second Chance (4:6-7)

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him [[Gen. 4:6-7](#)].

Why is Cain angry? He is angry enough that he is going to slay his brother. Back of premeditated murder there always is anger. Our Lord said that, if you are angry with your brother without a cause, you are guilty of murder. Back of anger is jealousy, and back of jealousy is pride. There is no sense of sin whatsoever in spiritual pride. James put it in language like this: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" ([James 1:15](#)). Cain's anger led to murder, but back of that was his jealousy and also his pride.

And that is how God deals with him. He says to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" Actually, the meaning is better translated as, "Shalt thou not have excellency?" The eldest son always occupied a place of preeminence, and this boy thinks that now he will lose that. God tells him there is no reason for him to lose it if he does well. To do well would be to bring that which God had accepted from Abel, a sacrifice and the acknowledgment that he was a sinner. But not this boy -- he's just angry.

"Sin lieth at the door." There are those who have interpreted this as meaning that a sin offering lies at the door; that is, that there is the little lamb lying at the door. That makes

sense because that was true, but I do not think it means the sin offering here. Up to this time and beyond this time, in fact, up until Moses, as far as I can tell from the Word of God, there was no sin offering. You find the instructions given for the sin offering in the Book of Leviticus. In the first part of that book, five offerings are given, and one is the sin offering. The sin offering did not come into existence until the law was given. That is the thing that Paul is saying in [Romans 3:20](#): ". . . For by the law is the knowledge of sin." The offerings that were brought up to that time were burnt offerings. Job in his day, which obviously was before Moses, brought a burnt offering. It was not in any way a sin offering. I think if you will examine the Scriptures, you will find that that is true.

It is obvious that Cain did not realize how vulnerable to sin he was. When God said to him that "sin lieth at the door," I believe He was saying that sin, like a wild beast, was crouching at the door waiting to pounce on him the moment he stepped out. For that reason Cain needed a sacrifice that would be acceptable to God for sin, a sacrifice that pointed to Christ. "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" ([1John 3:12](#)). "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." To do well would have been to bring the kind of offering that Abel had brought, a burnt offering. You find that Abraham also offered a burnt offering, for there could be no transgression until the law was given; that is, sin would not become a trespass against law until then. Therefore, you find that God actually protected this man Cain.

Cain Murders Abel (4:8-15)

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? [[Gen. 4:8-9](#)].

This is practically an impudent answer. He frankly had little regard for either his brother or for his God. He is trying to cover his action, but the Scriptures say, ". . . there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" ([Matt. 10:26](#)). That is something to think over if you have any secret sins. You had better deal with them down here because they are all going to come out in God's presence someday anyway. He already knows about them -- you might just as well tell Him about them. This fellow Cain tries to say that he is not guilty. "Am I my brother's keeper?" -- what an impudent answer!

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground [[Gen. 4:10](#)].

The writer to the Hebrews uses this in [Hebrews 12:24](#): "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood spoke of murder committed. The blood of Christ speaks of redemption; it speaks of salvation.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth [[Gen. 4:11-12](#)].

Yet in our day there is a curse upon the earth because of man's sin which causes it to lose its fertility. In some of the most lush sections of our earth multitudes of folk are starving. It takes great effort and ingenuity for man to make this earth produce in abundance. Certainly the blood of Abel cries out from the very earth itself -- blood that was spilled in murder by a brother.

And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear [[Gen. 4:13](#)].

If Cain's punishment was greater than he could bear, why didn't he just turn to God and confess his sin and cast himself upon God's mercy? It was too great for him to bear, but God was providing a Savior for him if he would only turn to Him.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me [[Gen. 4:14](#)].

Cain says now that he is to be hidden from the face of God, and of course, that is exactly what happened.

But notice now that God protects him. This is strange: God is actually harboring a murderer, a criminal.

And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him [[Gen. 4:15](#)].

I do not know what the mark was. There has been a lot of speculation, and I do not know why I should add my speculation to all of it. But God protects Cain. There has been no law given at this time. Cain is a sinner, but he is not a transgressor because there has been no law given about murder. His great sin is that he did not bring the offering that was acceptable to God. His deeds were evil in what he brought to God, and he manifested that evil nature in slaying his brother.

The Children Of Cain And A Godless Civilization (4:16-24)

We find that Cain moves out from God, and he establishes a civilization that is apart from God altogether. The children of Cain establish a godless civilization.

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden [[Gen. 4:16](#)].

I know a lot of folk who dwell in "the land of nod" when they are in church, but frankly, I do not know where the land of Nod really is. I have often wondered just where it is, and again, there is speculation about this. But we are told that Cain went out and dwelt in that area.

And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch [[Gen. 4:17](#)].

Men have been doing this ever since. They like to call streets and cities by their own names or by names of loved ones. Even in Christian work you have schools named for individuals. Men love to do that, whether they are Christian or whether they are after the order of Cain.

But here is where urban life, city life, began: "and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch." Cities have become one of the biggest problems that man has today. The cities, they say, are dying, and yet people all over the world are flocking to the cities.

And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methuselah: and Methuselah begat Lamech.

And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah [[Gen. 4:18-19](#)].

Here is the beginning of polygamy -- having more than one wife. Lamech now does that which is contrary to what God intends, contrary to what God has for man. You will never find anywhere in the Scriptures that God approves of polygamy. If you read the accounts accurately, you will find that He condemns it. He gives the record of it because He is giving a historical record, and that is the basis on which it is given to us here.

"Adah" means pleasure or adornment. She was the first one to make it to the beauty parlor, I guess. "Zillah" means to hide; I suppose that means she was a coquette. My, what two girls he had for wives! No wonder he had problems. Later on we will see what happened.

Here now is the beginning of civilization, the Cainitic civilization.

And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle [[Gen. 4:20](#)].

"He was the father of such as dwell in tents." The apostle Paul was a tentmaker later on, but here is the first housing contractor. "And of such as have cattle" -- here was the first rancher.

And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ [[Gen. 4:21](#)].

Here is the beginning of the musicians. When we hear some of the modern music today, I am sure there are many who would agree that it must have begun with Cain's civilization!

And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah [[Gen. 4:22](#)].

Here we see the ones who are craftsmen.

And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice;
ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a
man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.

If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and
sevenfold [[Gen. 4:23-24](#)].

Lamech says, "If Cain got by with it, I can get by with it. After all, Cain did not slay in self-defense, but I have." I do not know whether he did or not, but he says that he slew in self-defense. And I do not know whether or not his two wives entered into this, or whether or not he was defending one of them. We are not told how it happened. Lamech feels that he will be avenged seventy and sevenfold, but our Lord told Simon Peter that he ought to forgive his enemy that many times.

The Birth Of Seth (4:25-26)

And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his
name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed
instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his
name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD
[[Gen. 4:25-26](#)].

Apparently this was the beginning of men calling upon the name of the Lord.

Chapter 5

THEME: Final chapter of Adam's biography; the thrilling story of Enoch; the genealogy of Enoch to Noah

In the first section of the Book of Genesis (chapters 1 -- 11), we have world events -- first the Creation, then the Fall, and now the Flood in chapters 5 -- 9. In chapter 5 we have the book of the generations of Adam through Seth. Cain's line has been given to us and is now dropped. It will be mentioned again only as it crosses the godly line. This is a pattern that will be set in the Book of Genesis.

In one sense, chapter 5 is one of the most discouraging and despondent chapters in the Bible. The reason is simply that it is like walking through a cemetery. God said to Adam, "... For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" ([Gen. 2:17](#)), and they all died who were the sons of Adam. Paul says, "For as in Adam all die . . ." ([1Cor. 15:22](#)).

Final Chapter Of Adam's Biography (5:1-5)

GENEALOGY OF THE PATRIARCHS

These Columns Show Which of the Patriarchs Were Contemporary With Each Other

[illegible]

Key: Cr—Creation, B—Born, D—Died, Tr—Translated.

EXAMPLE: Noah (vertical list) was born when Methuselah (horizontal list) was 369 years old.

Picture: Genealogy Of The Patriarchs

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created [[Gen. 5:1-2](#)].

"And blessed them, and called their name Adam" -- not the Adamses, but Adam. He called their name Adam -- Eve is the other half of him.

"The book of the generations of Adam." This strange expression occurs again only in the beginning of the New Testament, and there it is "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ." There are these two books, as we are already seeing that there are two lines, two seeds, and they are against each other. The struggle is going to be long between the line of Satan and the line of Christ, the accepted line. The line which we are following now is the line through Seth, and it is through this line that Christ will ultimately come.

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth [[Gen. 5:3](#)].

When Adam was 130 years old, how old was he? In other words, when God created Adam, did He create him thirty years old or fourteen or forty-five? I do not know -- anything would be speculation. And if He created him that old, was he that old? And of course God could create him any age. May I say, this answers a lot of questions about the age of the earth. When someone says that certain rocks are billions of years old, they just do not know. Maybe when God created them, He created them two or three billion years old. The important thing here is that when Adam had been here 130 years, he begat a son in his own likeness. Adam was made in the likeness of God, but his son was born in his likeness.

And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters:

And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died [[Gen. 5:4-5](#)].

Now we start through the graveyard. Adam begat sons and daughters, "and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years" -- and what happened? "And he died."

In [verse 8](#) we read what happened to Seth. He died. He had a son by the name of Enos, and what happened to him? In [verse 11](#) we are told that he died. But he had a son, and Cainan was his son. And what happened to old Cainan? In [verse 14](#) we find that he died too. He had a son, Mahalaleel, and what happened to him? In [verse 17](#) it says he died. But he had a son, and his name was Jared, and, well, he died too ([v. 20](#)).

The Thrilling Story Of Enoch (5:21-24)

But before he died, Jared had a son by the name of Enoch.

And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah [[Gen. 5:21](#)].

And then did Enoch die? No! He did not die. This is a dark chapter, but here is the bright spot in it.

And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him [[Gen. 5:22-24](#)].

This is one of the most remarkable things, that in the midst of death one man is removed from this earth. It is said of Enoch that he "walked with God." This is quite remarkable, by the way. Only two men are said to have walked with God. In the next chapter, we find that Noah also walked with God. These were two antediluvians, and they walked with God. There are actually only two men in the Old Testament who did not die. One of them is Enoch, and the other, of course, is Elijah.

Enoch is one of the few before the Flood of whom we have any record at all. We are told that he did not die but that God took him -- he was translated. What do we mean by translation? Translation is the taking of a word from one language and putting it into another language without changing its meaning. Enoch was removed from this earth; he was translated. He had to get rid of the old body which he had. He had to be a different individual -- yet he had to be the same individual, just as the translated word has to be the same. Enoch was taken to heaven.

We read that Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begat Methuselah, and after that he walked with God. I do not know what the first sixty-five years of his life were. I assume that he was like the rest of the crowd -- this was a very careless period, moving now into the orbit of the days of Noah. But when that little boy Methuselah was born, Enoch's walk was changed. That baby turned him to God. My friend, sometimes God puts a baby in a family just for that purpose, and if that baby will not bring you to God, nothing else will. For three hundred years after that he walked with God, and he begat other children, sons and daughters. "And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years" -- that is how long he was on this earth, but he did not die. It does not say, "And then Enoch died," but it says, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

The only way I know to describe this is the way a little girl described it to her mother when she came home from Sunday school. She said, "Teacher told us about Enoch and how he walked with God." Her mother said, "Well, what about Enoch?" And the little girl put it something like this: "It seems that every day God would come by and say to Enoch, 'Enoch, would you like to walk with Me?' And Enoch would come out of his house and down to the gate, and he'd go walking with God. He got to the place that he enjoyed it so much that he'd be waiting at the gate of his house every day. And God would come along and say, 'Enoch, let's take a walk.' Then one day God came by and said, 'Enoch, let's take a long walk. I have so much to tell you.' So they were walking and walking, and finally Enoch said, 'My, it's getting late in the afternoon, I'd better get back home!' And God said

to him, 'Enoch, you're closer to My home than you are to your home; so you come on home with Me.' And so Enoch went home with God." I do not know how you can put it any better than that, my friend. That is exactly the story that is here.

I think that all the great truths here in Genesis are germane. In my judgment, this is the picture of what is to come; here is the Rapture of the church. Before the judgment of the Flood, God removes Enoch.

The Genealogy Of Enoch To Noah (5:27-32)

And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died [[Gen. 5:27](#)].

Methuselah lived longer than Adam. These two men, Adam and Methuselah, pretty well bridged the gap between creation and the Flood. According to our genealogy, this man Methuselah could have told Noah everything from the creation of the world. I personally feel that we have a gap in the genealogy given here. We know that in the opening of the New Testament the genealogy that is given of the Lord Jesus leaves out quite a few, and purposely so, because there is an attempt to give it in three equal segments. Certain ones are left out, but you will notice that it follows through accurately. I am sure that this genealogy is accurate, but the important thing is that we may have a gap here that would account for the fact that man has been on this earth a great deal longer than we have supposed. This is something I do not care to go into because it is quite an involved subject. Scripture is not clear right here. Why isn't it? Because God is not anxious to insist upon that. What He is trying to get over to us is the religious, the redemptive, history of mankind on this earth.

The name of Methuselah means "sending forth." Others believe that Methuselah meant: "When he is dead, it shall be sent." What will be sent? The Flood. As long as Methuselah lived, the Flood could not come. The very interesting thing is that according to a chronology of the genealogy of the patriarchs (shown on the preceding page), the year that Methuselah died is the year that the Flood came. "When he is dead, it shall be sent" - that is the meaning of his name.

Why did Methuselah live longer than any other person? God kept him here just to let mankind know that He is patient and merciful. God will also wait for you, my friend -- all of your life. Peter speaks of the long-suffering of our God: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" ([1Pet. 3:20](#)).

As we continue down through the rest of this chapter, each man is mentioned and then his death.

And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years: and he died.

And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth [[Gen. 5:31-32](#)].

It is the popular theory in the world, blindly accepted by men, and the conclusion, I think, of all philosophy, that human nature is inherently and innately good and that it can be

improved. The whole program that is abroad today is that, if we will just try to improve the environment of man and his heredity, he can really be improved. Communism and socialism seek to improve man. Arminianism means that man can assist in his salvation. Modernism says that man can save himself. In other words, salvation is sort of a do-it-yourself kit that God gives to you. Some of the cults tell us that human nature is totally good and that there is no such thing as sin.

What does God say concerning man? God says that man is totally evil, totally bad. That is the condition of all of us. "There is none righteous, no, not one" ([Rom. 3:10](#)). That is the estimate of the Word of God. If you will accept God's Word for it, it will give you a truer conception of life today than is given to us by others.

Here is mankind, and we are following a godly line now. Where is it going to lead? Is it going to lead to a millennium here upon this earth? Are they going to come to Elysian fields and establish Utopia? No. The very next chapter tells us that a Flood, a judgment from God, came upon the earth.

Chapter 6

THEME: Cause of the Flood; God's deliverance from the judgment of the Flood; instructions to Noah for building the ark; passengers in the ark

Cause Of The Flood (6:1-7)

In chapter 6 we see not only the Flood, but also the reason for the judgment of the Flood.

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose [[Gen. 6:1-2](#)].

This matter of "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men" is something that has caused no end of discussion. There are a great many good men who take the position that "the sons of God" were angels. I personally cannot accept that at all. Most of my teachers taught that the sons of God were angels, and I recognize that a great many of the present-day expositors take that position. However, I cannot accept that view, because, if these were good angels, they would not commit this sin, and evil angels could never be designated as "sons of God." Also, the offspring here were men; they were not monstrosities. I do not know why it is assumed by so many that the offspring were giants. We will look at this more closely when we come to [verse 4](#).

And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years [[Gen. 6:3](#)].

We believe that Noah preached for 120 years, and during that time the Spirit of God was striving with men. Peter makes it very clear that it was back in the days of Noah that the Spirit of God was striving with men in order that He might bring them to God -- but they would not turn. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he

might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison" ([1Pet. 3:18-19](#)). These spirits were in prison when Peter wrote, but they were preached to in the days of Noah. How do we know that? [Verse 20](#) reads: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." When were they disobedient? During the long-suffering of God in the days of Noah -- during those 120 years.

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown [[Gen. 6:4](#)].

It says, "There were giants in the earth in those days," but it does not say they are the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men. It does say this about the offspring: "the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." These were not monstrosities; they were men. The record here makes it very clear that the giants were in the earth before this took place, and it simply means that these offspring were outstanding individuals.

Humanity has a tremendous capacity. Man is fearfully and wonderfully made -- that is a great truth we have lost sight of. This idea that man has come up from some protoplasm out of a garbage can or seaweed is utterly preposterous. It is the belief of some scientists that evolution will be repudiated, and some folk are going to look ridiculous at that time.

Evolution is nothing in the world but a theory as far as science is concerned. Nothing has been conclusive about it. It is a philosophy like any other philosophy, and it can be accepted or rejected. When it is accepted, it certainly leads to some very crazy solutions to the problems of the world, and it has gotten my country into trouble throughout the world. Anyone would think that we are the white knight riding through the world straightening out wrongs. We are wrong on the inside ourselves! I do not know why in this country today we have an intelligentsia in our colleges, our government, our news media, and our military who think they are super, that somehow or another they have arrived. It is the delusion of the hour that men think that they are greater than they really are. Man is suffering from a fall, an awful fall. He is totally depraved today, and until that is taken into consideration, we are in trouble all the way along.

Then what do we have here in [verse 4](#)? As I see it, Genesis is a book of genealogies -- it is a book of the families. The sons of God are the godly line who have come down from Adam through Seth, and the daughters of men belong to the line of Cain. What you have here now is an intermingling and intermarriage of these two lines, until finally the entire line is totally corrupted (well, not totally; there is one exception). That is the picture that is presented to us here.

I recognize, and I want to insist upon it, that many fine expositors take the opposite view that the sons of God are actually angels. If you accept that view, you will be in good company, but I am sure that most of you want to be right and will want to go along with me. Regardless of which view you take, I hope all of us will be friends, because this is

merely a matter of interpretation. It does not have anything to do with whether or not you believe the Bible but concerns only the interpretation of the facts of Scripture.

What was the condition on the earth before the Flood? What caused God to bring the judgment of the Flood?

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually [[Gen. 6:5](#)].

There are four words here that ought to be emphasized and which I have marked in my Bible. "The wickedness of man was great." "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil." Only evil -- that is all it was -- and that "continually." These four words reveal the condition of the human family that was upon the earth.

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart [[Gen. 6:6](#)].

"And it repented the LORD." What repented the Lord? The corruption of man repented the Lord. It looks as if God has changed His mind and intends to remove man from the earth. He probably did just that with a former creation on the earth. Although it grieved God because of man's sin, thank God, He did not destroy him.

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them [[Gen. 6:7](#)].

It does not mention fish because they are in the water, and He is simply going to send more water.

God's Deliverance From The Judgment Of The Flood (6:8-13)

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD [[Gen. 6:8](#)].

And why did Noah find grace?

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God [[Gen. 6:9](#)].

Why did God save Noah? Because he walked with God? Yes, but we are also told: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" ([Heb. 11:7](#)). It took faith to prepare an ark on dry land when it had not even drizzled! In this same chapter in Hebrews, we are told that it was by faith that Enoch was translated. You see, when the church is taken out of this world, every believer is going because the rapture is for believers, and the weakest saint is going out. They are going out because God extends mercy, and we are told that the mercy of God will be demonstrated at that time.

Why the Flood? Why is God going to send the Flood?

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth [[Gen. 6:11-12](#)].

That is, man had corrupted God's way and was going his own way. He had turned from the purpose for which God had created him.

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth [[Gen. 6:13](#)].

God is going to send the Flood, and I would like to mention here several reasons why.

Man had a promise of a Redeemer, and he was told that there was coming a Savior on the earth. That is the thing man should have been looking for; instead of that, he turned from God.

God had provided a sacrifice for Adam and Eve, and we find that a great, eternal principle was put down with Cain and Abel. These two boys, Cain and Abel, stand as the representatives of two great systems, two classes of people: the lost and the saved, the self-righteous and the broken-spirited, the formal professor and the genuine believer. That is what was present in the human race at this time.

And then we find that the patriarchs were living so long that the lives of Adam and Methuselah bridged the entire gap from the creation to the Flood. They certainly could have given a revelation to all mankind, which they did. Then we are told in [Jude 1:14](#) and [Jude 1:15](#) that Enoch preached, he prophesied, during that period. We are also told that Noah preached during that period as he was building the ark. When Enoch disappeared, that should have alerted the people to the intervention of God in human affairs. They also knew about this man Methuselah and the meaning of his name; and when he died, they should have known the Flood was coming. Finally, there was also the ministry of the Holy Spirit. God said that His Spirit would not always strive with man. The Spirit of God was striving with him, but, when man totally rejected God, the Flood came in judgment upon the earth.

The entire human family has turned from God ". . . There is none righteous, no, not one" ([Rom. 3:10](#)). There are just a few, though, who do believe Him -- Noah and his family. Here is one man who walked with God; he believed God. Here is a man who still trusted God -- "by faith Noah." Here is a man who was willing to risk building a boat on dry land. If the rains did not come, he certainly would be the laughingstock of the community. I think he was just that for 120 years, but Noah believed God.

There is a striking comparison in the fact that the days of Noah are to be duplicated before the Lord comes again to the earth, not for the Rapture, but to establish His Kingdom. But there are some remarkable parallels that have already taken place. For instance, this chapter opened: "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them. . . ." There was this tremendous population increase, and by that time man had spread pretty much over the earth. He was in North America, in Asia, in Europe, and in Africa. He had spread in every direction.

Today we have a tremendous population explosion, and men again have increased upon the face of the earth.

Also, there is the fact that during the Great Tribulation period, the Holy Spirit will no longer restrain evil. He will be there to convert men, but we are told very definitely that He will not be restraining evil on the earth. God's overtures to men will be despised and rejected, and certainly they are even today. Isn't it amazing that the only ones who are listened to by the world today are the liberal Protestant and Roman Catholic ministers? You hear nothing from conservative men. They have attempted to make some sort of inroad, and they are trying their best to get back in the mainstream, but we have come to the day when, if you are going to stand for God, you will find that you will not be able to talk before a television camera very often. Instead, you must learn to protest, to march, and to deny Christ before you can expect a television interview!

Finally, the world in that day will be faced with the great problem of the Rapture -- there will have been a great number of people who have mysteriously left the earth. Also there were judgments in Noah's day, and yet they did not heed them.

Instructions To Noah For Building The Ark (6:14-16)

In the preparation for the Flood, God is giving the people ample opportunity.

Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch [[Gen. 6:14](#)].

"Make thee an ark of gopher wood." Gopher wood is an almost indestructible wood very much like our redwood here in California.

"Rooms shalt thou make in the ark." The word for "rooms" has the idea of nest. The elephant would need a room, but the mole would not need quite that much space. He could be given just a little dirt in a corner, and that is all he would need.

"And shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." The ark was to be made waterproof.

And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits [[Gen. 6:15](#)].

The impression that most people have of the ark is the impression they were given by the little Sunday school pictures which made it look like a houseboat. It was, to me, a very ridiculous sort of a travesty. It was a caricature of the ark instead of a picture of it like it actually was.

To begin with, the instructions for the building of the ark reveal that it was quite sizable. "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits." If a cubit is eighteen inches, that ought to give you some conception of how long this ark was.

The question arises as to how they could make it substantial in that day. My friend, we are not dealing with cavemen. We are dealing with a very intelligent man. You see, the intelligence that the race has today came right through Noah, and he happened to be a very intelligent man.

Noah is not making an oceangoing ship to withstand fifty-foot waves. All he is building is a place for life, animal life and man, to stay over quite a period of time -- not to go through a storm, but just to wait out the Flood. For that reason, the ark might lack a great deal that you would find on an oceangoing ship, and that would give it a great deal more room.

If a cubit is 18 inches, 300 cubits would mean that the ark was 450 feet long. That is a pretty long boat, but the relative measurements is the thing that interests me. For instance, I noted that the New Mexico, one of our battleships of the World War II era, was built 624 feet long, 106 1/4 feet wide, and with a mean draught of 29 1/2 feet. By comparison the ark had practically the same ratio; so that you did not have a ridiculous looking boat at all, but one which would compare favorably with the way they build ships today.

A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it [[Gen. 6:16](#)].

"A window shalt thou make to the ark." The window was not a little slit made in the side of the ark. Have you ever stopped to think about the stench that there might be with all those animals in there over that period of time? The window was a cubit high and went all the way around the top of the ark. The roof must have overlapped the window quite a bit. That is the way they ventilate a gymnasium today. I also noticed that at the state fair in Dallas, Texas, the buildings in which the animals were housed had that window which goes all the way around at the top. With all the animals they had there, it was not an unpleasant place to be. People were sitting in there eating their meals and also sleeping. It was very comfortable, and the odor was not bad. I have heard it said that poor Noah had to stick his head out this little window in order to live. That's ridiculous. That is man's imagination and not what the record says here at all.

"And the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof." The ark had only one door, and that is important. Christ said, "I am the way" and "I am the door to the sheepfold," and He is the door to the ark.

"With lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it." The ark had three decks, you see, and then, I take it, one either on top or on the bottom which would make four decks. Was there a door for each deck? I am rather of the opinion there was only one door and not one for each floor, but frankly, that is beside the point.

Passengers In The Ark (6:17-22)

And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die [[Gen. 6:17](#)].

God is bringing judgment upon the earth -- upon animal and bird and man.

But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive [[Gen. 6:18-20](#)].

"Two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive." Noah was not a Frank Buck who went out "to bring 'em back alive." He was not a big game hunter. He did not have to go after these animals -- they came to him.

Animals in danger will do that. I remember the first time that we went into Yosemite Valley when our daughter was just a little thing. She had never seen snow before, and when we put her down in the snow, she began to whimper. But she quit when she looked over and saw a little deer. I believe we could have gone over and petted that little deer, but realizing the possible danger, of course we did not approach him any closer. When I mentioned the deer to the ranger, he laughed and said, "Yes, there's snow up in the High Sierra right now, and when there is snow up there and there's danger, they come down here and are as tame as any animal could possibly be. But the minute the snows melt in spring, they leave this area, and you couldn't get within a country mile of any of them." Why? Because when an animal is in danger, he will come to man. At the time of the Flood, I do not think Noah had any problem at all, for the animals all came to him.

And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he [[Gen. 6:21-22](#)].

Noah is now to do something very practical. It took a lot of hay in the ark to feed these animals. Some people are going to say, "But some of those animals ate meat. They would eat each other!" I do not think so. Up to the time of the Flood, apparently both men and animals were not flesh-eating. They just did not eat flesh; there were no carnivorous animals. We are told of a day in the Millennium when the lion and the lamb will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like an ox (see [Isa. 11:6-7](#)). That could certainly come to pass, for that probably was the original state of the animal.

Chapter 7

THEME: Noah, his family, and the animals enter the ark; destruction of all flesh and the salvation of those in the ark

Noah, His Family, And The Animals Enter The Ark (7:1-9)

And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation [[Gen. 7:1](#)].

Why was Noah righteous? It was by faith, just as later on Abraham was counted righteous because of his faith: "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" ([Gen. 15:6](#)). Noah believed God, and it was counted to him for

righteousness. "By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark . . ." the writer to the Hebrews said ([Heb. 11:7](#)). That is the reason God saved him.

Have you ever noticed how gracious God is to this man in all of this time of judgment? Here in [verse 1](#) He says "Come thou. . . ." This is the same invitation that the Lord Jesus gives today to all mankind: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will you rest" ([Matt. 11:28](#)). Then in [verse 16](#) of this chapter, we read, "And the LORD shut him in." Isn't that lovely? And finally, chapter 8 opens, "And God remembered Noah." How wonderful! God could very easily have forgotten all about Noah. Years later He could have said, "Oh my, I forgot all about that fellow down there. I put him in an ark and forgot about him!" That would have been too bad, wouldn't it? But God did not forget. God remembered Noah. God never forgets. He remembers you. The only thing that He does not remember is your sin if you have come to Him for salvation. Your sins He remembers no more. What a beautiful thing this is!

Now Noah and his family enter into the ark. Did you know that this story of Noah, just like the story of creation, has wandered over the face of the earth? I wish that I could give you the Babylonian account. All you have to do is to compare them to see the differences. The other accounts are utterly preposterous and ridiculous. The very fact that most nations and peoples have an account of both creation and the Flood should tell you something, my friend. It ought to tell you that there is a basis of truth for them. All of these peoples would not come up with such a record if they had been making up stories. And if you want to know which one is accurate, just make a comparison. The Babylonian account, for example, is a perfectly ridiculous story of a sort of war going on among the gods, one against the other, and that is what brought the Flood. In contrast, the Bible tells us that the Flood was a judgment of God upon man for his sin -- that makes sense, by the way.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth [[Gen. 7:2-3](#)].

This was the basis of a lawsuit years ago against Dr. Harry Rimmer who had offered a thousand dollars to anyone who could show a contradiction in the Bible. There were several liberal theologians who testified in a court of law that this was a contradiction. Why would it first say two of each kind and now seven of each kind? Of course Dr. Rimmer won the lawsuit. All you have to do is turn over to see that when Noah got out of the ark, he offered clean beasts as sacrifices. Where would he have gotten the clean beasts if he had not taken more than two? It was only of the clean beasts that he took seven, and now we know why. Those that were not clean went in by twos, a male and a female.

"Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female" -- that is for those that are clean.

For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth [[Gen. 7:4](#)].

For seven days the world could have knocked at the door of the ark, and frankly, they could have come in -- God would have saved them. All they had to do was to believe God.

And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah [[Gen. 7:6-9](#)].

Nowhere does Scripture say that Noah went out and drove the animals in. It was not necessary -- they came to him.

Destruction Of All Flesh And The Salvation Of Those In The Ark (7:11-24)

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth [[Gen. 7:11-12,16-17](#)].

What is the scientific, historical evidence for the Flood? I am not going to enter into this subject other than to mention one of the finest books on this subject which I can highly recommend. It is *The Genesis Flood* by Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960). Both of these men are thoroughly qualified to write on this subject. John Whitcomb, Th.D., professor of Old Testament at Grace Theological Seminary, and Henry M. Morris, Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, professor of hydraulic engineering and chairman of the Department of Civil Engineering in the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, joined together and have written a book on the Genesis Flood. They show that the Flood was universal, it was a great catastrophe, and there is historical evidence for it. They also answer the uniformitarian argument (that existing processes acting in the same manner as at present are sufficient to account for all geological changes). This is one of the many different theories that have been advanced to discount the geological evidences of the universal Flood. I assume that there is an

abundance of historical evidence for the Flood, and it is not necessary for me to go into it, as it has been answered in this very scholarly book.

And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark [[Gen. 7:23](#)].

On the other hand, there have recently come from the press several books by men whom I consider to be pseudointellectuals and pseudotheologians. They take the position that the Flood was local; that is, that it was confined to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. In other words, it was sort of a big swimming pool and that is about all. The Genesis Flood absolutely demolishes that thought altogether, and I am sure that you realize that the Scriptures make it very clear that the Flood covered the whole earth. God said that the entire earth was going to be destroyed by the Flood. "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" ([Gen. 6:13](#)).

The human family had already gotten to North America, and the animals were certainly there -- nobody would argue that point for a moment. But if you say that the Flood was not universal, then you have someone besides Noah starting the human family over again -- and that is just not the way the Word of God tells it. You are on the horns of a dilemma, as I see it: you either have to accept the Word of God, or you have to reject what it says. To my judgment, to attempt to make a case for a local flood is actually, in the long run, to reject the Word of God. The Bible makes it very clear that it was a universal flood. "And every living substance was destroyed . . . and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days [[Gen. 7:24](#)].

In other words, for a period of approximately half a year, for five months, the waters prevailed on the earth.

The Genesis Flood not only answers the question of its being a universal rather than a local flood, but it also answers this question of uniformitarianism. There are those who take the position that there was no such thing as a great convulsion or catastrophe like the Flood. I am not going into detail, except to point out that Peter makes it very clear that we should expect such scoffers. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" ([2Pet. 3:3-4](#)). The scoffer has always been a uniformitarian, but you could not very well hold that position and accept the integrity of the Word of God at this particular point. This is very important to see.

Chapter 8

THEME: The rains cease; earth dries -- Noah leaves the ark; Noah builds an altar and offers sacrifice

The Rains Cease (8:1-12)

And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged;

The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;

And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat [[Gen. 8:1-4](#)].

We are given the record not only of the building up of the Flood but also of the prevailing and now the assuaging of the Flood. We are told that "God remembered Noah" -- how lovely -- and that "God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged." It did not happen just overnight. The buildup of the waters took over 150 days, and then there were 261 days in the assuaging. That looks to me like it is something more than just a local flood.

And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made [[Gen. 8:5-6](#)].

We could say that this is the beginning of the end of the Flood. Notice what Noah does:

And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground [[Gen. 8:7-8](#)].

Frankly, Noah becomes a bird-watcher. He sends out these two birds, the raven and the dove.

But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;

And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more [[Gen. 8:9-12](#)].

I want you to see a great spiritual truth that we have here in the eighth chapter in this account of the raven and the dove. After Noah had spent over a year in the ark, he sent forth a raven, and the raven never came back. But the dove kept coming back and even brought in its beak a little bit of greenery, an olive leaf. I do not know why the dove and olive leaf have always been symbolic of peace, but they are. I cannot quite see that that is exactly the message of the dove's second return. But when the dove did not return at all, that was the sign that the judgment was over and that peace had returned to the earth. But, of course, man going out of the ark is the same type of man that all the sons of Adam were who had provoked the Flood as a judgment from God in the first place. You are going to see that there is not too much improvement in man after the Flood; in fact, there is none whatsoever.

There is a great spiritual lesson here which I would not have you miss for anything in the world. Noah is engaged here in "bird-watching." He sends out the raven, and the raven does not come back. Why didn't that raven come back? You must recognize what that raven eats -- it feeds on carrion. There was a whole lot of flesh of dead animals floating around after the Flood, and that was the kind of thing this old crow ate. He did not return to the ark because he was really going to a feast, and he was having a very wonderful time. The raven was classified as an unclean bird, by the way.

The dove is a clean bird and is so listed later on in Scripture. Remember that Noah took into the ark both the clean and the unclean animals. The dove brought back information: it was a regular homing pigeon. With the dove's second trip, Noah was now a confirmed bird-watcher -- and the dove brought back evidence that the dry land was appearing. The third time, the dove did not return, and Noah knew that the waters of judgment were gone.

I have said before that all great truths of the Bible are germane in Genesis. The Bible teaches that the believer has two natures, an old and a new nature: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" ([2Cor. 5:17](#)).

The clean and the unclean are together. You and I as believers have these two natures. Our Lord said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" ([John 3:6](#)). And Paul writes: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" ([Rom. 7:18](#)).

Paul spoke of a struggle between the two natures. And there is a struggle today between the old nature and the new nature of a believer.

The raven went out into a judged world, but he found a feast in the dead carcass because that is the thing he lived on. The bloated carcass of an elephant would have made him a banquet; I tell you, it would have been for him a bacchanalian orgy. Back and forth, he restlessly went up and down. May I say to you, that is the picture of the old nature; the old nature is like that raven. The old nature loves the things of the world and feasts on them. That is the reason so many people watch television on Sunday night and do not go to church. Don't tell me that you have some good excuse for that. You do have an old nature, but that is no excuse because you ought not to be living in the old nature.

The dove went out into a judged world, but she found no rest, no satisfaction, and she returned to the ark. The dove represents the believer in the world. The old raven went out into the world and loved it. When he found that old carcass, he probably thought the Millennium had arrived! You see, it is a matter of viewpoint. A professor said to me, "This matter of what's right and wrong is relative." He's right; it is. It is what God says is right, and it is what the professor says is wrong -- and he does not find very much that is wrong, by the way. What God says is wrong is wrong. The believer is told, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . ." ([1John 2:15](#)). You and I are living in a judged world today. We are in the world, but not of it. We are to use it, but not abuse it. We are not to fall in love with it, but we are to attempt to win the lost in this world and get out the Word of God. Our Lord told us, ". . . Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" ([Mark 16:15](#)). Let's take care of our job down here and get out the Word of God -- that is the important thing. The dove recognized what kind of a world she was in, and she found no rest. She found rest only in the ark, and that ark sets forth Christ, if you please.

Let me ask you this very personal question: What kind of bird are you? Are you a raven or a dove? If you are a child of God, you have both natures -- but which one are you living in today? Do you love the things of God, or don't you?

Earth Dries -- Noah Leaves The Ark (8:13-19)

And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry [[Gen. 8:13](#)].

This brings us to 261 days, so that the total time of the Flood was 371 days, extending over a year. That also conforms to the statement of Scripture that the Flood was universal; it was not just the filling of a swimming pool -- it certainly was more than that!

There have been other discoveries that have revealed something concerning the Flood, and I would like to pass on to you the words of Dr. J. E. Shelley who takes the position that the Flood was universal, that it covered the entire earth: "The most striking example of this is found in the case of the mammoths. These elephants are found buried in the frozen silt of the Tundra, Siberia, all over the length of the Continent of Asia, and in the North of Alaska and Canada. They are found in herds on the higher ground not bogged in marshes, hundreds of thousands in number." He goes on to say that these elephants have been examined and found to have drowned. If they had just gotten bogged down, they would have died of starvation.

"The farther north one goes, the more there are, till the soil of the islands of the White Sea inside the Arctic circle consists largely of their bones mingled with those of sabre-tooth tiger, giant elk, cave bear, musk ox, and with trunks of trees and trees rooted in the soil. There are now no trees in those regions, the nearest being hundreds almost thousands of miles away. The mammoth could not eat the stunted vegetation which now grows in this region for but three months in the year, a hundred square miles of which would not keep one of them alive for a month. The food in their stomachs is pine, hawthorn branches, etc. These mammoths were buried alive in the silt when that silt was

soft. They and the silt were then suddenly frozen and have never been unfrozen. For they show no signs of decomposition. Mammoth ivory has been sold on the London docks for more than a thousand years. The Natural History Museum purchased a mammoth's head and tusks from the ivory store of the London Docks. This head was absolutely fresh and was covered with its original fur."

If you doubt the universality of the Flood, here is more than enough evidence to convince you.

And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark [[Gen. 8:18-19](#)].

Noah Builds An Altar And Offers Sacrifice (8:20-22)

God is now going to make a covenant with Noah. We will see this new beginning as we get into the next chapter. This covenant is a very important one. When God made it with Noah, He made it with the human family that is on the earth today.

And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar [[Gen. 8:20](#)].

Now do you see why Noah took seven of the clean beasts and only two of the unclean? He is now offering the clean beasts as sacrifices.

The first thing that Noah did when he came out of the ark was to build an altar to the Lord and offer a sacrifice, a burnt offering, to Him. That burnt offering speaks of the person of Jesus Christ. It was offered on the basis of acceptance before God and of praise to God in recognition of Him. Without doubt, this was one of the things that caused God to be pleased with Noah at this particular time.

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done [[Gen. 8:21](#)].

You can just write it down that that is true. What about your youth? Was your imagination evil or not? In our contemporary society we can see the rebellion of youth, and isn't it interesting to note the direction they have gone? They have gone in the same direction. Every imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth -- and it does not improve. I was visiting in a hospital the other night. The curtain was pulled between the beds, but you could hear the next patient talking with her husband. It seemed to be a contest between those two to see who could outcuss the other one! I have never heard such profanity on the part of two human beings. May I say to you, the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. That just happens to be an accurate statement that was made a long time ago.

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease [[Gen. 8:22](#)].

It has been suggested that the Flood was so extensive that it tilted the earth. As you know, the earth is not straight on its axis. We are off center, if you please. The magnetic center is different from the center on which we are revolving. Something happened somewhere along the line, and it is the belief of many that this is when it took place. Because the earth revolves like that, that gives us our seasons. It is sort of going around like a wobbly top. You remember that when you were young and would spin a top, the top would run down and get wobbly. That is the way the earth revolves today, and as a result we have the seasons.

Prior to the Flood, man learned the three R's: (1) Rebellion against God was realized -- it came right out in the open. (2) Revelation from God was rejected by man. Noah's witness did not reach them. (3) Repentance was absolutely repudiated; there was no return to God at all. Men refused the refuge that God provided, and for 120 years Noah had no converts. These are the three R's. Men led in rebellion, they rejected the revelation, and there was no repentance on their part.

Now as this man Noah comes forth from the ark, he stands in a most unique position. He stands in the position of being the head of the human race again -- the same position Adam had. It is said that we are all related to Adam, but we are closer kin than that: we are all related in Noah. In one sense, Noah is the father of all of us today.

Chapter 9

THEME: New instructions and arrangements; the sin of Noah and his sons

Now we come to a new beginning. It is difficult for us to realize what a revolutionary beginning it is. The dispensation of human conscience is over, and God is putting man under government -- he is to govern himself. We will see something of this in the covenant which God made with Noah. And let's keep in mind that, when God made the covenant with Noah, He made it with you and me, for He made it with all mankind.

New Instructions And Arrangements (9:1-17)

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth [[Gen. 9:1](#)].

The word replenish is meaningful here because we know that there was a civilization before the Flood, and now there is to be a civilization after the Flood. (When Adam was told to replenish the earth, we assume that there had been living creatures -- I don't know what to call them -- before Adam. They apparently were living creatures of God's creation; anything I could say beyond that would be pure speculation.)

Notice that the first thing God tells Noah to do is to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." There is to be the propagation of the race. Remember that God gave this command under special circumstances. Today we are in a time of population explosion, and there is overpopulation that is quite dangerous. However, Noah stood in

an unique position. He and his family were the only folk around. Can you imagine driving down the freeway, going to work in the morning, and there are cars in front of you, cars to the right of you, cars to the left of you, cars behind you, cars honking -- you're in a traffic snarl. Then about a year later you go out on the freeway and there is not another car there. Yours is the only one. You might as well take down all the traffic lights. You won't need them because you are the only one driving through. This would be quite an unusual experience for us, would it not? Well, this was the experience of Noah in his day.

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered [[Gen. 9:2](#)].

Another part of the covenant is man's protection and rulership over the animal world. I take it that before this time the relationship was different. Apparently man had not been a meat eater before. All the animals were tame, and one is not inclined to eat an animal that is a pet. Remember that the animals came to Noah when the Flood was impending; they seemed to have no fear of him at all.

Now the animals will fear and dread man. However, man is responsible for the animal world. Man's treatment of the animal world is a brutal story. Man has attempted to exterminate many of the animals. Man would have slaughtered all the whales around the Hawaiian Islands for the money they could get if the government had not intervened. At one time the buffalo were in great herds in the West, but they were killed by man. Today we must have places of refuge to protect animals and bird life. It is well that we do that. The animals of Africa are being exterminated. Man is a mighty brutal creature. We need a government to protect the animals from man.

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things [[Gen. 9:3](#)].

Now God gives to man a new provision for food. Before the Flood God gave to man the green earth, the plant life, to eat. Now He tells Noah that he is able to eat animal life. There are diet faddists, and often this type of thing becomes a part of a person's religion. I once met a lady who was a vegetarian as a part of her religion, and she was quite excited when I told her that these antediluvians were all vegetarians. She thought this reinforced her argument that we should all be vegetarians, and she had her assistant take it down in her notes. However, I think she must have erased it later because I told her this: "I wouldn't make too much of it if I were you because you must remember that it was a bunch of vegetarians who were destroyed in the Flood. If diet had in any way improved them at that time, they would not have been destroyed." We see here that God now permits man to eat flesh.

However, God prohibits the eating of blood.

But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat [[Gen. 9:4](#)].

The blood should be drained out. The blood speaks of life; draining it indicates that the animal should be killed in a merciful way rather than prolonging its suffering and that it must be really dead. Although I enjoy the sport of hunting, I don't like to shoot quail, for instance, because sometimes I just wound the little fellow and it crawls away so that I can't find it. I don't like to do that. God says that when you are going to eat animals, you are to make sure that you don't eat them with their blood. It should be drained out, ensuring that the animal is killed in a merciful manner.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man [[Gen. 9:5](#)].

This is an interesting statement, but not so meaningful to those of us who do not live on a frontier. However, there are certain animals even we encounter -- such as skunks and opossums which may be rabid or disease-carrying rodents -- that pose a real danger to man.

Now the fifth and the last statement in the new covenant is the most amazing --

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man [[Gen. 9:6](#)].

Here God lays down the principle for government and protection of man. He gives the government the right of capital punishment. We have seen that in this new covenant which God has given, man is to propagate the race, he is to have the protectorate and the rulership over animals, he is given a new provision for food and a prohibition against the eating of blood. Now we see that he is given the principle of government, which is the basis of capital punishment.

May I say to you that it is amazing how the attitude of the present generation has gotten away from the Bible. You see, we do not have a Bible-oriented population anymore. It is almost totally ignorant of the Word of God. As a result, we find the judges, the lawyers, and the politicians all wanting to get rid of capital punishment. They have succeeded in many cases, and I think that finally it will be eliminated totally from American culture. At the same time we have an increase in crime and the most horrible crimes taking place. I have dealt with this subject more in detail in a booklet which I entitled, *Is Capital Punishment Christian?* I believe that capital punishment is scriptural and that it is the basis of government. The government has the right to take a life when that individual has taken someone else's life. Why? Well, I think it is quite obvious that God has ruled it so in order to protect human life.

Our lives are no longer safe on the streets and often not in our homes, either. Although I know that many officials would deny this, one reason is our attitude toward capital punishment. When a criminal knows that if he takes a life, his life is going to be sacrificed, then may I say to you, he'll think twice before he takes a life. Also, there is an idea today about getting a gun-control law. May I say that the problem is not with the gun in the hand, it is with the heart inside the man.

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" is a law that we had better get back on our statute books and get rid of this sob-sister stuff. Human

government is the area into which all mankind has moved (Gentiles included). "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" is the basis for human government. It has not been changed as far as the governments of the world are concerned.

And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein [[Gen. 9:7](#)].

This is a repetition of God's instructions in [verse 1](#).

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you [[Gen. 9:8-9](#)].

"With your seed after you" includes all the human race.

And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth [[Gen. 9:10](#)].

All of God's creatures are included in this covenant. Isaiah predicts that someday the lion and the lamb will lie down together and that they will not hurt or destroy each other. In Paul's Epistle to the Romans he mentions that the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain in this present age. May I say to you that God has made this covenant with Noah and with all of His creatures until the time His Kingdom comes on earth. It is for all of Noah's descendants and "every living creature that is with you."

And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth [[Gen. 9:11](#)].

This is God's promise. His purpose is that He will not again destroy the earth with a flood. The next time His judgment of the earth will be by fire. We find that stated in [2Peter 3](#).

In the next few verses we see the picture of the covenant, and in my opinion, really a spiritual meaning of the covenant. It is sort of a sacrament, if you please. The thing which makes it that is a visible sign to which are annexed promises.

And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth [[Gen. 9:12-13](#)].

The rainbow is more or less of a sacrament, that is, a token of a covenant.

And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth [[Gen. 9:14-16](#)].

Notice that God says, "I will look upon it" and "I will remember." God didn't say that you would see it; He said that He would see it. He said He would look upon it and it would be an "everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." That ought to be the encouragement whenever you look at a rainbow.

And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth [[Gen. 9:17](#)].

This is God's covenant, not merely with Noah but with all flesh that is upon the earth.

Let me say again that the rainbow could be called a sacrament because a sacrament is a visible sign to which are annexed certain promises. The Passover feast, the brazen serpent, Gideon's fleece, and in our day, baptism and the Lord's Supper are such signs.

Dr. John Peter Lange once made the statement, "God's eye of grace and our eye of faith meet in the sacraments." That is what happens when man looks at the rainbow. Faith lays hold of the promise attached to the sign. You see, the merit is in what the sign speaks of. There is no faith in a promise and there is no assurance in a sign -- the word and the sign go together, you see. God makes a promise and attaches a sign to it. Now the rainbow is God's answer to Noah's altar. It is as if God says, "I'll remember, and I'll look upon it." A friend of mine told me about a time he was traveling by plane across the country and going over a storm. The plane was up where the sun was shining, and all of a sudden he saw a rainbow that went all the way around, a complete circle. I guess that is the way God always sees it.

The Sin Of Noah And His Sons (9:18-29)

We will find something that is very disappointing in the remainder of this chapter. The question arises: When man came out of the ark after the Flood and all the sinners were dead, does that mean that there was no more sin on the earth? Well, let's look and see.

And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan [[Gen. 9:18](#)].

Why is Ham's son Canaan mentioned here? For two reasons. One reason we'll see in a moment. Another reason is that when Moses wrote this record, the people of Israel were traveling to the land of Canaan, and it was encouraging for them to have this information regarding God's judgment upon the people of Canaan.

These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:

And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent [[Gen. 9:19-21](#)].

Here is the record of Noah's sin. The hard fact of the matter is that Noah got drunk, and this is sin. There is no satisfactory excuse, although many expositors have attempted to find excuses for him. One excuse is that he was ignorant of the effect of wine since no one had been drunk before. You will notice that before the Flood, drunkenness is not mentioned as one of the sins. Then there are those who hold the canopy theory about the Flood. (There are many things I have not had time to mention.) The canopy theory is that before the Flood there was an ice covering which the sunlight filtered through so that grapes did not ferment before the time of the Flood and that this was something new to Noah. Well, all I can say is that this is a new beginning in a new world, but it is old sin that is still there. This incident reveals this, and it was given to answer a big question, as we shall see.

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father,
and told his two brethren without.

And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their
shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their
father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their
father's nakedness.

And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son
had done unto him [[Gen. 9:22-24](#)].

Now notice what God says through Noah, which became part of the Noahic covenant.

And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be
unto his brethren [[Gen. 9:25](#)].

I would have you note that God said, "Cursed be Canaan" -- He does not put a curse on Ham. A question that keeps arising is this: Is the curse of Ham upon the dark races? It certainly is not. To think otherwise is absolutely absurd. The Scripture does not teach it. The coloration of the skin, the pigment that is in the epidermis of the human family, is there because of sunlight from the outside not because of sin from within. There is no curse placed upon Ham; the curse was upon Canaan his son. We do not know in what way Canaan was involved in this incident. We are given only the bare record here, but we recognize that Canaan is mentioned for a very definite purpose. Let me repeat that it hasn't anything to do with color -- it is not a curse of color put on a part of the human race. That teaching has been one of the sad things said about the black man. It is not fair to the black man and it is not fair to God -- because He didn't say it. After all, the first two great civilizations were Hamitic -- both the Babylonian and Egyptian civilizations were Hamitic.

Another question arises: Why did God give us a record of the sin of Noah? Well, if man had written the Book of Genesis, he would have done one of two things. He either would have covered up the sin of Noah by not mentioning it at all to make Noah a hero; or else he would have made Noah's sin a great deal more sordid than it was. But God recorded it for His own purposes.

First of all, as I have indicated, it was to encourage the children of Israel in entering the land of Canaan during the time of Moses. It let them know that God had pronounced a curse upon Canaan. He had pronounced His judgment upon the race. All you have to do

is read the rest of the Old Testament and secular history to discover the fulfillment of this judgment. The Canaanites have pretty much disappeared.

God had a further reason for recording the incident of Noah's sin. In [Romans 15:4](#) we read these words: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." It was recorded to let you and me know something of the weakness of the flesh. The Lord Jesus said that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. And in [Galatians 2:16](#) it is made very clear that no flesh would be justified by keeping the law: ". . . for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." So God has given us here the story of a man who fell, revealing the weakness of the flesh.

There is no use trying to make excuses for Noah. The bare fact is that Noah got drunk.

Now, maybe you as a Christian do not get drunk. But, may I say, you and I may be living in the flesh to the extent we're just as displeasing to God as Noah was. We have, I think, a wrong conception of life in this universe that we are in. For instance, our nation has spent billions of dollars to put men on the moon, and it looks like it's not a good place to live anyway. But we spend relatively little on how to live on this earth. But God is concerned about training you and me how to live on this earth.

Let us not make some of the mistakes that are made in the consideration of this incident. We need to make it very clear that Noah did not lose his salvation. I trust that you understand that. It was an awful thing that he did -- there is no excuse for it. It was his weakness of the flesh, but he was still a saved man.

And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant [[Gen. 9:26-27](#)].

As I have mentioned before, when Moses was given this revelation from God, he was leading the people of Israel to the land of Canaan. The Israelites were descendants of Shem.

And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.

And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died [[Gen. 9:28-29](#)].

Chapter 10

THEME: Sons of Japheth; sons of Ham; sons of Shem

This is a chapter of genealogies, of families, which are the origin of the nations of the world. This chapter is far more important than the space I'm giving to it would indicate. If you are interested in ethnology and anthropology and the story of mankind on the earth, you may want a far deeper study than you will find here. H. S. Miller, who has his master's degree in ethnology, has charted the origin of the nations, using [Genesis 10](#) as a basis for the threefold division of the human family, which is revealed in these three sons

of Noah: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Ethnology makes it evident, by the way, that neither the sons of Japheth nor the sons of Ham ever comprised what some folk call the lost ten tribes of Israel.

Here in chapter 10 we have the genealogies of all three sons of Noah.

Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood [[Gen. 10:1](#)].

First we see the genealogy of Japheth ([vv. 2-5](#)), then the genealogy of Ham ([vv. 6-20](#)) -- this was the outstanding people at the very beginning -- and finally the genealogy of Shem ([vv. 21-32](#)). Notice that throughout the Bible God follows this same pattern of giving the rejected line first and saying a word about it, then He drops that subject entirely and does not bring it up again. Finally, He gives the accepted line, the line which is leading to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sons Of Japheth (10:2)

The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras [[Gen. 10:2](#)].

According to H. S. Miller's chart, the Scythians, the Slavs, Russians, Bulgarians, Bohemians, Poles, Slovaks, Croatians came from Magog. The Indians and the Iranic races -- Medes, Persians, Afghans, Kurds -- all came from Madai. From Javan we have the Greeks, Romans, and the Romance nationalities such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, etc. Coming from Tiras are the Thracians, the Teutons, the Germans, and then from that we have the east Germanic and the European races, the north Germanic or the Scandinavians and the west Germanic, from which come the High German and the Low German, and then the Angles and the Saxons and the Jutes, the Anglo-Saxon race, the English people.

Well, I simply can't go into the whole chart, but it is an interesting study. You can see that the majority of us in America descended from these lines.

Sons Of Ham (10:6-10)

And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan [[Gen. 10:6](#)].

As you can see, Ham had other sons, but the curse was only upon Canaan. Why it was not upon the others, I am not prepared to say. From Canaan came the Phoenicians, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, etc.

From Ham's son Cush came the Africans -- the Ethiopians, the Egyptians, the Libyans, etc. All of these races are Hamitic, you see. Now we have some detail regarding a son of Cush --

And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD [[Gen. 10:8-9](#)].

"He began to be a mighty one in the earth." He wanted to become the ruler of a great world empire, and he attempted to do it.

"He was a mighty hunter before the LORD." This doesn't mean that he was a wild game hunter. Sometimes a little boy is given an air gun, and when he goes out and shoots a sparrow, his folks say, "My, look at that! He's a little Nimrod. He hit a sparrow!" But Nimrod wasn't shooting sparrows or hunting wild game in Africa. He was a hunter of men's souls -- that is the thought in this passage.

And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar [[Gen. 10:10](#)].

He was the founder of those great cities in the land of Shinar.

Nimrod has quite a story which you can get from secular history. Alexander Hislop, in his book, *The Two Babylons*, gives the background which I am not going to repeat here, but it is a fascinating story of how Nimrod was responsible for the Tower of Babel. It was he who attempted to bring together the human race after the Flood in an effort to get them united into a nation of which he could become the great world ruler. He was the rebel, the founder of Babel, the hunter of the souls of men. He was the lawless one, and he is a shadow or a type of the last world ruler, the Antichrist who is yet to appear.

The first great civilization, therefore, came out from the sons of Ham. We need to recognize that. It is so easy today to fall into the old patterns that we were taught in school a few years ago. Now the black man is wanting more study of his race. I don't blame him. He hasn't been given an opportunity in the past several hundred years. The story of the beginning of the black man is that he headed up the first two great civilizations that appeared on this earth. They were from the sons of Ham. Nimrod was a son of Ham.

I'm not going to attempt to develop that line any further. You see, we are following the pattern set by the Holy Spirit in which He gives the rejected line first and then drops it. We are going to turn now to the line that will lead to Abraham and then to the nation Israel and finally to the coming of Christ into this world. It is this line which we will follow through the Old Testament. God is bidding good-bye to the rest of humanity for the time being, but He will be coming back to them later on.

Let me give you a quotation from Saphir's book, *The Divine Unity of Scripture*:

The tenth chapter of Genesis is a very remarkable chapter. Before God leaves, as it were, the nations to themselves and begins to deal with Israel, His chosen people from Abraham downward, He takes a loving farewell of all the nations of the earth, as much as to say, "I am going to leave you for a while, but I love you. I have created you: I have ordered all your future; and their different genealogies are traced."

In chapter 10 seventy nations are listed. Fourteen of them are from Japheth. Thirty of them come from Ham. Don't forget that. It will give you a different conception of the black man at his beginning. And twenty-six nations come from Shem, making a total of seventy nations listed in this genealogy.

It seems to me that God is showing us what He has done with the nations of the world. Why has the white man in our day been so prominent? Well, I'll tell you why. Because at the beginning it was the black man, the colored races, that were prominent. Then the sons of Shem made a tremendous impact upon this world during the time of David and Solomon. And you will notice that from Shem there came others, such as the Syrians, the Lydians, and the Armenians, also the Arabians from Joktan. These great nations appeared next. Apparently we are currently in the period in which the white man has come to the front. It seems to me that all three are demonstrating that, regardless of whether they are a son of Ham or a son of Shem or a son of Japheth, they are incapable of ruling this world. I believe that God is demonstrating this to us, and to see this is a tremendous thing.

Sons Of Shem (10:21-32)

Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were children born [[Gen. 10:21](#)].

And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan [[Gen. 10:25](#)].

When I went over this verse in a previous Bible study, I received all sorts of weird interpretations of what was meant by "the earth was divided" -- that it refers to a physical division here in the earth, that the earth had undergone some tremendous physical catastrophe. Well, my friend, all that Moses is simply doing is anticipating the next chapter in which he will give us the account of the Tower of Babel. At that time the earth was divided. May I say that the simple interpretation seems to be the one that a great many folk miss, and we should not miss it.

Now let's just pick up the final verse of this chapter --

These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood [[Gen. 10:32](#)].

I want to submit to you that this is one of the great chapters of the Bible although we have given very little space to it. You can see what a rich study this would make for anyone who really wanted a fair appraisal of the human family. A great many have used this remarkable chapter for that purpose.

Chapter 11

THEME: The building of the Tower of Babel; from Shem to Abraham

The Building Of The Tower Of Babel (11:1-9)

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech [[Gen. 11:1](#)].

I do not know what language the people spoke at that time. A friend of mine who was a fellow Texan, a preacher in Texas, facetiously said to me, "You and I are probably the only two who really know what they spoke before the Tower of Babel because it was

Texan." Well, I'll be honest with you, I've come to the conclusion that it could have been something else. What the language was, we simply do not know. I believe whatever that language was will be the language that will be spoken in heaven, and it will be a much better language than we have today, with more specific nouns and verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there [[Gen. 11:2](#)].

"As they journeyed from the east" -- notice it was from the east. Mankind was apparently moving toward the west. "They found a plain in the land of Shinar," which is in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley.

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar [[Gen. 11:3](#)].

Down in that area there is no stone, and so they made bricks. That in itself reveals something about the substantial character of their buildings. Even today brick is a popular type of building material. Yet the brick was used there because of its practicality; it was a necessity.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth [[Gen. 11:4](#)].

Notice that they said, "Let us build us a city . . . and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad." They had a bad case of perpendicular I-itis -- let us make us a name! In my opinion, the sole purpose of this tower was for a rallying place for man.

The Tower of Babel was a ziggurat. There are many ruins of ziggurats in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. I have a picture of the ruins of one in Ur of the Chaldees where Abraham lived. It was made of brick, solidly constructed, and around it was a runway which went to the top. Apparently, on top of it was an altar on which, in certain instances, human sacrifices were offered. Later on children were offered, put in a red-hot idol. All of this was connected with the ziggurat in later history.

But at the time of its construction, the Tower of Babel represented the rebellion of mankind against Almighty God. Apparently it was Nimrod who led in this movement. He was the builder of the city of Babel and evidently of the Tower of Babel also. It was to be a place for him to rear a world empire that was in opposition to God.

In order to realize his ambition and to make his dreams come true, two features and factors were essential: First, he needed a center of unity, a sort of headquarters, as it were. He needed a capital, a place to assemble, a place to look to. This was why he built the city of Babel. It fulfilled one of his requirements to carry out his dream of world empire. Secondly, he needed a rallying point, not just geographical but psychological, that which gives motive -- a spark, an inspiration, a song, a battle cry, sort of like a "rally-around-the-flag-boys." There had to be some impelling and compelling motivation. There had to be a monument, Lenin's tomb is where Communism meets, and in Nimrod's day it was

the Tower of Babel. "Let us make us" is defiance and rebellion against God. "Let us make us a name" reveals an overweening ambition.

Now let's see what the Tower of Babel was not. It was not built as a place of refuge in time of high water. He wasn't building above the flood stage, as some expositors suggest. In fact, I consider that a very puerile interpretation. After all, Lenin's tomb is not a place of refuge when the Volga River overflows! No, this tower revealed the arrogant, defiant, rebellious attitude of man against God. God had said to man that he should scatter over the earth and replenish the earth. But man in essence answered, "Nothing doing. We're not going to scatter; we are going to get together. We are through with You." The Tower of Babel was against God.

Also, the Tower of Babel was a religious symbol. It was a ziggurat. All through that valley, as I have indicated, there are ruins of ziggurats. They were places where people worshiped the creature rather than the Creator. Some ziggurats were round, others were square, but all of them had runways leading to the top, and on the top the people carried on the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. After all, when they could see the sun, moon, and stars, they knew they were not going to have a flood, and they felt that God had been pretty mean to have sent the Flood.

Now notice God's reaction to the Tower of Babel --

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do [[Gen. 11:5-6](#)].

This is a tremendous statement! Since all the people spoke one language, they didn't have the great language barrier. They could get together and pool their knowledge and resources -- "and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." We find here that man has a fallen nature in spite of the Flood and that he is totally depraved. God cannot ignore this rebellion, for it is a rebellion against Him. God is going to put up a protective wall. He is going to throw up a barrier. This was necessary because man is such a very capable creature. He can go to the moon and he can fly in a jet plane. I still am amazed that I can sit in a jet plane, flying five miles high in the air and be served a delicious dinner. I just can't get over it, I'll be honest with you. It seems unbelievable. Man has done that, friend. Man is a very competent creature.

You can see what mankind would do with one language if they all came together against God.

So notice what God did --

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth [[Gen. 11:7-9](#)].

Now man is scattered over the face of the earth. They were together in their rebellion, but now they can't understand one another. You know, a language barrier is a wall that is higher than the Wall of China. It is higher than the Berlin Wall and more effective. It is that which separates people, and it is stronger than any national border and any ocean.

There are a great many who say that languages developed gradually. But God said He confounded their language so that right then, while they were building, they suddenly couldn't understand each other. The building project came to a sudden halt, and folk moved away from Babel -- they went in every direction.

This is a tremendous thing that took place. Here is a "speaking in tongues" when they couldn't understand each other. It is a miracle, a miracle of speaking and a miracle of hearing. They spoke different languages, and those who heard could not understand them.

Let me ask you a question: Was this a blessing in disguise, or was it a curse upon mankind? Well, for God's purposes it was a blessing. For man's development away from God, it was definitely a judgment. Down through the centuries mankind has been kept separate, and it has been a great hindrance to him. One thing that is happening today through the medium of radio and television and jet travel is that these walls are being broken down. They are tumbling down like the walls of Jericho. This is one reason that I believe God is coming down in judgment again.

Now let's put over against this tongues movement those events of the Day of Pentecost. That was another great tongues movement, and that time we find that the gospel was preached in all the languages that were understood by the people there. This was not speaking in an unknown tongue -- that never was involved in the tongues movement to begin with. On the Day of Pentecost, God is giving His answer to the Tower of Babel. God is saying to mankind, "I have a gospel and a message for you, and I'm coming to you with the gospel in your own language."

This is the thing that God has done, and today the Bible has gone out in more languages than any other book. It is still being translated into tongues and dialects and is being brought to literally hundreds of tribes throughout the world. The gospel is for all mankind, and the reason and the purpose for the talking in tongues was to let the human race know that God had answered the Tower of Babel. He had a redemption for man now. The mission has been accomplished. It is no longer necessary for man to try to work out his salvation. He can listen to God's message and turn to Him. The gospel is for you, whoever you are and whatever tongue you speak. It's for you. It's for all the nations of the world. We are told in the final book of the Bible that there will be gathered into His presence ". . . a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues . . ." ([Rev. 7:9](#)).

From Shem To Abraham (11:10-32)

Now we will take up the line of Shem since it is the line which will be followed throughout the Old Testament.

These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood [[Gen. 11:10](#)].

Shem's genealogy is given in the following verses, then we read:

And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah:

And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters [[Gen. 11:24-25](#)].

You see that we are following the line of Terah. Why Terah? Notice the next verse:

And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran [[Gen. 11:26](#)].

Now we are going to follow the line of Abram, whom we know as Abraham.

We're following the line of Shem, and we are actually going right through the Bible following this line. The Word of God will follow this line directly to the Cross of Christ. God has recorded all of this as preliminary. God now has demonstrated to man that he is in sin. In the incident of Cain and Abel, we find that Cain would not acknowledge that he was a sinner. In him we see a demonstration of the pride of life. At the Flood we see the sin of the flesh because the people then were given over to the sins of the flesh. They were indulging in violence and their every thought and imagination was evil. They were blind to their need of God. They were deaf to His claim, dead to God, dead in trespasses and sins. God gave them an invitation through Noah. They spurned the invitation and remained in the sins of the flesh. Then, here at the Tower of Babel, we see the sin of the will, rebellion against God. That was the Tower of Babel.

Do you have your own little Tower of Babel which you have built? Are you in rebellion against God? Well, it is natural for human nature to be in rebellion against God.

Little Willie was being very cantankerous one evening. He was really cutting up, and his mother was having a great deal of trouble with him. Finally, she had to get him and put him in a corner -- sat him down with his face to the wall and told him to sit there. She left him and went back to the living room with the rest of the family. After awhile she heard a noise in there, and she called to him, "Willie, are you standing up?" He said, "No, Mom, I'm sitting down, but I am standing up on the inside of me!"

Well, believe me, there are a lot of men and women in our day who are standing up on the inside of them, standing against God. They have built their own little Tower of Babel.

Now as we follow the line which is going to lead to Christ, here are the generations or the families of Terah --

Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.

And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there [[Gen. 11:27-31](#)].

The name Haran means delay.

And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran [[Gen. 11:32](#)].

This bit of history is given to let us know that we are going to follow Abraham, and his story will begin in the next chapter.

It is at this point that the Book of Genesis -- and, for that matter, the Bible as a whole -- takes a turn. There is a great Grand Canyon which goes right down through the Book of Genesis. The first eleven chapters are on one side, and the last thirty-nine chapters are on the other side. In the first eleven chapters we cover over 2,000 years, as long a period as the rest of the Bible put together. Contrast that 2,000 years with the 350 years from [Genesis 12](#) through 50. In these first eleven chapters of Genesis we have seen the Creation, the fall of man, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. These are four great events which covered that long span of years.

Chapter 12

THEME: God's call and promise to Abraham; Abraham's response; Abraham's lapse of faith

The chapter before us brings us to the other side of the Grand Canyon which runs through Genesis. The atmosphere is altogether different here, and we are going to slow down to a walk. The emphasis turns from events, stupendous events, to personalities -- not all of them were great but all of them were important personalities. In Genesis there are four, and others will follow in subsequent books of the Bible.

In the first eleven chapters we have seen four great events: the Creation, the fall of man, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. In all of these tremendous events God has been dealing with the human race as a whole. Other than Adam and Abraham, God did not appear to anyone else. God was dealing with the entire race of mankind. There is a radical change at chapter 12. Now there will be brought before us four individuals. God will no longer be dealing with events, but with a man, and from that man He will make a nation. In the first section we will see Abraham the man of faith ([Gen. 12](#) -- [Gen 23](#)). Then there will be Isaac the beloved son ([Gen. 24](#) -- [Gen 26](#)). Next there will be Jacob the chosen and chastened son ([Gen. 27](#) -- [Gen 36](#)), and then there will be Joseph's suffering and glory ([Gen. 37](#) -- [Gen 50](#)). These four patriarchs are extremely important to the

understanding of the Word of God. We will be taking up their stories in the rest of the Book of Genesis.

You see, God has demonstrated that He can no longer deal with the race. After the fall of man, we see the great sin of Cain. What was his great sin? Pride. He was angry because of the fact that deep down in his heart he was proud of the offering he had brought to God. And when his offering was rejected while his brother's was accepted, it caused him to hate his brother. His hatred led to murder, and the root of all of it was pride. Let me remind you that pride was also Satan's sin. Pride is the sin of the mind.

Then at the time of the Flood, the sin was the lust of the flesh. We saw that the actions and even the imaginations of man were to satisfy the flesh.

God had to bring the Flood to judge man at the time He did, because there was only one believer left -- Noah. If God had waited even another generation, He would have lost the entire human race. God had certainly been patient with the world. He had waited 969 years, the entire life span of Methuselah. I am confident that you would say that 969 years is long enough to give anybody an opportunity to change his mind. But instead of turning to God, the people were in open rebellion, asserting a will that was against God. Following the Flood, the Tower of Babel reveals that "none seeketh after God."

After the Tower of Babel, God turns from the race of mankind to one individual. From that individual He is going to bring a nation, and to that nation He will give His revelation, and out of that nation He will bring the Redeemer. Apparently, this is the only way that God could do it. Or let me put it like this: If there were other ways, this was the best way. We can trust God to do the thing which is the best.

When God chose Abraham, He chose a man of faith. Abraham, by any person's measuring rod, is a great man. He is one of the greatest men who ever lived on this earth. How do you measure great men even today? Well, to begin with, the man has to be famous, and certainly Abraham measures up to that. He is probably the world's most famous man. Even in this day of radio and television, probably more people have heard of Abraham than of anyone else. More have heard of Abraham than have heard of the President of the United States, or of any head of state, or of any movie star, or of any athlete. The three great religions of the world go back to Abraham: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. There are literally millions of people in Asia and Africa today who have heard of Abraham but have never heard of the ones who make the headlines in our country. One of the marks of a great man is fame; Abraham was a great man.

Another mark of a great man is that he must be noble of character, a generous man. Can you imagine anyone more generous than Abraham? I doubt whether there is a man alive who would do what he did. When he and his nephew came back into the land of Palestine, he told Lot to choose any portion that he wanted, and Abraham said he would take what was left. Do you think any man would do that in a business deal today? They don't even do that in a church, friend, much less in a hard-boiled business world. But Abraham was a generous man. Have you ever noticed how generous he was with the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah? He told them he wouldn't take the booty, not even so much as a shoestring, because God was the One to whom he was looking.

Thirdly, a great man must live in a momentous time. He must be, as Napoleon said, a man of destiny. The man and the right time must meet at the crossroads of life. That was certainly true of Abraham.

I believe the world would agree with me on the first three points we have mentioned. They might not agree with this one: The fourth essential of a great man is that he must be a man of faith. You will notice that all great men, even when they are not Christian, have something in which they believe. God said that Abraham was a man of faith. In the Bible record the greatest thing that is said about Abraham is that he believed God: ". . . Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" ([Rom. 4:3](#)). As we go through these chapters in Genesis, we will find that God appeared to this man seven times, each time to develop faith in his life. This does not mean that he was perfect. The fact of the matter is that he failed many times. God gave him four tests, and he fell flat on his face on all four of them. But, like Simon Peter, he got up, brushed himself off and started again. May I say to you, if God has touched your heart and life, you also may fall, but you are surely going to get up and start over again. We will see this happen in Abraham's life as we go through the chapter before us.

God's Call And Promise To Abraham (12:1-3)

The first three verses give us the threefold promise of God to Abraham (Abram), and actually this is the hub of the Bible. The rest of Scripture is an unfolding of this threefold promise.

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country,
and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that
I will shew thee:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and
make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth
thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed [[Gen.
12:1-3](#)].

The first of the threefold promise is the land. God says, "I am going to show you a land, and I am going to give it to you." The second part of the promise is the nation -- "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." He also promises him, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." The third part of the promise is that He would make him a blessing: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This is God's threefold promise.

Now the question arises: Has God made good on His promises to Abraham? God has certainly brought from him a great nation, and it has probably the longest tenure as a nation of any people on this earth. No one can quite match them.

How about the second promise -- has Abraham been a blessing to all mankind? Yes, through the Lord Jesus Christ he has been a blessing to the whole world. Also the entire Word of God has come to us through Abraham.

God has fulfilled all His promises to Abraham -- except the first one. God had said, "Abraham, I'm going to give you that land." And look at what is happening over there in our day. They are holding on to the land by their toenails, but they don't have it. Somebody says, "God didn't make that good." Well, let's not put it that way, my friend. Let's give God a chance. Two-thirds of the promise has been made good right to the very letter. But God said that He would not let them be in the land if they were disobedient and if they were away from Him. And they are away from Him today. As a result they are having trouble over there. Don't say that God is not making good His promise. The fact of the matter is that God is doing exactly what He said He would do. The day will come when God will put the people of Israel back in the land, and when He does it, they won't have only a toehold. They will have the land all the way east to the Euphrates River and all the way north as far as the Hittite nation was and all the way south to the river of Egypt, which is a little river in the Arabian desert. They have never really occupied the land God gave to them. At the zenith of their power, they occupied 30,000 square miles, but that is not all that God gave them. Actually, He gave them 300,000 square miles. They have a long way to go, but they will have to get it on God's terms and in God's appointed time. The United Nations can't do anything about it, and neither the United States nor Russia can settle their problem.

My friend, it is very comfortable today where I sit. I have come to the position that God is running things. It is nice to sit here without being frightened by the headlines in the newspaper and without being disturbed by what is going on in the world. God is in control, and He is going to work things out His way.

Now in the light of God's three promises to Abraham, what did he do?

Abraham's Response (12:4-9)

In [verse 1](#) we read: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram." We know from other Scriptures that God had called Abram when he lived in Ur of the Chaldees: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell" ([Acts 7:2-4](#)). Abraham obeyed God by leaving his home, his business, and the high civilization of Ur, "not knowing whither he went." Yet it was not complete obedience because we read that he took with him some of his family. He took with him his father, Terah, and God had told Abraham not to take him. Why was it that God wanted to get him out of the land and away from his relatives? We learn the answer in the Book of Joshua. ". . . Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods" ([Josh. 24:2](#)). They served other gods -- Abraham was an idolator. The world was pretty far gone at that time. God had to move like this if He was going to save humanity. The other alternative for Him was to blot them all out and start over again. I'm glad He didn't do that. If He had, I wouldn't have been here, because I arrived here a sinner. The fact of the matter is, all sinners would have been blotted out. Thank God, He is a God of mercy and grace, and He saves sinners.

We'll follow the Scripture text now and call him Abram until chapter 17 where God changes his name to Abraham.

So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran [[Gen. 12:4](#)].

"So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him." Now he will follow God's leading to the land of Canaan.

"And Lot went with him" -- oh, oh! It is still incomplete obedience; he is taking his nephew Lot with him.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came [[Gen. 12:5](#)].

Abram took Sarai, his wife, and that was all right, of course.

"And Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran." The time Abram had spent in Haran was a period of just marking time and of delaying the blessing of God. God never appeared to him again until he had moved into the land of Palestine, until he had separated at least from his closer relatives and brought only Lot with him.

"And into the land of Canaan they came" -- now [verse 6](#):

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land [[Gen. 12:6](#)].

Here is the record of the fact that the Canaanites were the descendants of Ham's son Canaan. I want to add something very important right at this point. A great many people think that Abram left a terrible place in Ur of the Chaldees and came to a land of corn and wine, a land of milk and honey, where everything was lovely. They think that Abram really bettered his lot by coming to this land. Don't you believe it. That is not what the Bible says. And through archaeology we know that Ur of the Chaldees had a very high civilization during this time. In fact, Abram and Sarai might well have had a bathtub in their home! Ur was a great and prosperous city. Abram left all of that and came into the land of Canaan, "and the Canaanite was then in the land." The Canaanite was not civilized; he was a barbarian and a heathen, if there ever was one. Abram's purpose in coming to Canaan was certainly not to better his lot. He came in obedience to God's command.

Now he has obeyed, and notice what happens --

And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him [[Gen. 12:7](#)].

Abram builds an altar unto the Lord when He appears to him this second time. While he was in Haran, the place of delay, God had not appeared to him.

You see, one of the reasons that you and I are not always blessed in the reading of the Bible is because the Bible condemns -- we are not living up to the light which God has already given to us. If we would obey God, then more blessing would come. We see in Abram's experience that God did not appear again to him until after he had moved out and had begun to obey God on the light that he had. Now God appears to him again. Then Abram builds an altar, and we will see that he is a real altar-builder.

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai, on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD [[Gen. 12:8](#)].

Abram does two things when he gets into the land. He pitches his tent -- that is like buying a home in a new subdivision and moving in. He "pitched his tent" -- that's where he lived. Then "he builded an altar." That was his testimony to God, and everywhere Abram went, he left a testimony to God.

My friend, what kind of a testimony do you have? To have a testimony, you don't need to leave tracts in front of your house and you don't have to have a "Jesus Saves" bumper sticker on your car (then drive like a maniac down the freeway, as some folk do). That is no testimony at all. May I say to you that Abram quietly worshiped God, and the Canaanites soon learned that he was a man who worshiped the Lord God.

And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south [[Gen. 12:9](#)].

South is the right direction to go for warmer weather; so this man is moving south. He has itchy feet. He's a nomad.

Now we come to the blot in his life, actually the second one.

Abraham's Lapse Of Faith (12:10-20)

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land [[Gen. 12:10](#)].

Abram was in the land, and this was the place of blessing. God never told him to leave. But a famine was in the land, and I think one morning Abram pushed back the flap of his tent, looked out, and said, "Sarai, it looks like everybody's going to Egypt. There's a famine, you know, and it's getting worse. Maybe we ought to think about going down." And I suppose Sarai said, "Anything you want to do, Abram. I'm your wife and I'll go with you." After a few days had gone by and Abram had talked to some of these travelers (probably coming from north of where he was living and bringing the news that the famine was getting worse and was moving south) I imagine that he said to Sarai one evening, "I think we had better pack up and go to Egypt." So Abram and Sarai start down to Egypt.

Notice that God had not told him to do that. When God had appeared to him the last time, He had said, "This is it, Abram, this is the land I am going to give you. You will be a

blessing, and I am going to bless you here." But, you see, Abram didn't believe God. He went down into the land of Egypt. In the Bible, Egypt is a picture of the world. You will find that all the way through. I think it is still a picture of the world -- this was my opinion of it when I was there. But Abram went down to Egypt.

It's amazing how the world draws Christians today. So many of them rationalize. They'll say, "You know, brother McGee, we're not able to come to church on Sunday night because we have to get up and go to work Monday morning." Well, almost everybody has to do that. And it's amazing that those same people can go to a banquet on a week night and sit through a long-winded program with lots of music and lots of talk and not worry about getting up for work the next morning. It's amazing how the world draws Christians today and how they can rationalize.

I think that if you had met Abram going down to Egypt and had said, "Wait a minute, Abram, you're going the wrong direction -- you should be staying in the land," that Abram could have given you a very good reason. He might have said, "Look, my sheep are getting pretty thin and there's not any pasture for them. Since there's plenty of grazing land for them down in Egypt, we're going down there." And that's where they went.

However, immediately there is a problem, and it concerns Sarai because she is a beautiful woman.

And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt,
that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a
fair woman to look upon:

Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee,
that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they
will save thee alive [[Gen. 12:11-12](#)].

As you probably know, over along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea, ancient scrolls were found in the caves there, and they are known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. At first the unbelieving scholars thought that they had found something that would disprove the Bible. But have you noticed how silent the higher critics have become? They just don't seem to have found anything that contradicts the Bible.

Among the scrolls was a set which couldn't be unrolled because they were so fragile -- they had been wrapped so long that they would just shatter and come to pieces. One name could be seen, the name Lamech, so they were called part of the book of Lamech and said to be one of the apocryphal books of the Bible. Boy, how incorrect that was! The nation Israel bought them, and in the museum the experts began to moisten and soften them until they were unrolled. The scholars found that they contained [Genesis 12,13,14](#), and [Genesis 15](#), not in the Bible text but rather an interpretation of it. In the part that deals with chapter 12, it tells about the beauty of Sarai, actually describing her features and telling how beautiful she was. It confirms what we read of her in the Word of God.

The same scroll gives a description of Abram's exploration after God told him to "walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it" ([Gen. 13:17](#)). The scroll gives a first person account by Abram of his journey. It confirms what the Bible has said about the land's beauty and fertility. The eyewitness (whether or not it was really Abram, we do

not know) certainly confirmed the Bible record. A great many people who visit that land today can't understand how it could be called a land of milk and honey. Well, in the Book of Deuteronomy we learn what caused the desolation that is seen there today. But it was a glorious land in Abram's day.

However, there were periods of famine, and Abram left the land and went down to Egypt during such a time.

As Abram neared Egypt, he recognized that he would get into difficulty because of the beauty of his wife. So he said to Sarai,

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee [[Gen. 12:13](#)].

"Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister." That was half a lie, as we shall see. Half a lie is sometimes worse than a whole lie, and it certainly was intended to deceive. Abram's fears were well founded because Pharaoh did take Sarai. We know from the Book of Esther that in those days there was a period of preparation for a woman to become a wife of a ruler. And during that period of preparation, God "plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues," and let him know that he was not to take Sarai as his wife.

And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had [[Gen. 12:18-20](#)].

God, you see, was overruling in the lives of Abram and Sarai, but God did not appear to him while he was in the land of Egypt.

Chapter 13

THEME: Abraham separates from Lot; Lot goes to Sodom; God appears to Abraham and reaffirms His promise

In chapter 13 we see the return of Abram from the land of Egypt. Abram and Lot leave Egypt and return to the Land of Promise. Lot separates from Abram and goes to Sodom, and then God appears to Abram for the third time. As long as Abram is in the land of Egypt and as long as he is still holding on to Lot, God does not appear to him. The minute that he comes back to the land and there is the separation from Lot, God appears to him.

Abraham Separates From Lot (13:1-9)

And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold [[Gen. 13:1-2](#)].

Abram was the John D. Rockefeller of that day. He was a very wealthy man at this time.

And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai [[Gen. 13:3](#)].

Abram went far north of Jerusalem. He had come to the south, around Hebron, and now he goes north of Jerusalem to Bethel.

Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD [[Gen. 13:4](#)].

Although he may stumble and fall, this man comes back to God. There is always a way back to the altar for Abram, the prodigal son, and any man or woman who wants to come back to God. The arms of the Father are open to receive them.

And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents [[Gen. 13:5](#)].

Lot did pretty well down in the land of Egypt also.

And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land [[Gen. 13:6-7](#)].

The Word of God is a marvelous Word if you just let it speak to you. Will you notice this: Abram got two things in the land of Egypt which caused him untold grief. One was riches, and the second was a little Egyptian maid by the name of Hagar. We will see more about her later. But now he has riches, and it causes him and Lot to have to separate -- there is strife between them.

Did you notice this statement: "And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land?" Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen are fighting, and then Abram and Lot disagree. The very interesting thing is that then the Canaanite probably whispered over to the Perizzite, "Look at them! Fightin' again! When they came into this land and built an altar to the living and true God, how we looked up to Abram! When he first came here, we thought he was such a wonderful man. We knew he was honest, we knew he was truthful, but look at him now. Look at the strife they're having!" I do not think the Perizzite and the Canaanite were very well impressed by Abram and Lot at this time.

Let me say this to you, although it may step on your toes. I do not know your town, I do not know where you live, but if yours is like other towns and like the town I came from, the Methodists and the Baptists and the Presbyterians don't get along, and there is fighting. And when there are these internal fights in a church today, the unsaved man on the outside knows about it. May I say to you, he then says, "If that's Christianity, I don't want any part of it. I can get a fight outside. I don't need to join the church to get a fight." The Lord Jesus did not say to His own, nor to the church today, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you're fundamental and you organize a church." Oh,

no! He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" ([John 13:35](#)). The "Perizzite" and the "Canaanite" -- those old rascals -- know when your church is fighting on the inside, my friend.

I had an uncle who never came to know the Lord. My aunt used to weep and say, "Oh, he won't listen!" Do you know why? With her lived a sister, another aunt, and I used to go there sometimes on Sundays for dinner. Do you know what we had for dinner? Roast preacher! One of my aunts went to the Methodist church, the other went to the Presbyterian church, and oh, boy, did they try to outdo each other, talking about the preacher and the fights that were going on. I used to watch my uncle. He would just sit there and eat. Then he'd get up to leave and go down to his club for the afternoon. When he would come home in the evening, he wasn't drunk, but he sure had had several drinks. They never won him to Christ. There are a lot of people not being won today, my friend, because of the strife that is inside the church. This is an interesting thing: "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land." And they still dwell in the land. They are right near your church, by the way.

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee,
between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy
herdmen; for we be brethren.

Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee,
from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right;
or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left [[Gen.
13:8-9](#)].

It is Abram who makes the division. It took a big man to tell Lot this. In other words, Abram is saying that Lot could choose what he wanted and Abram would take what was left.

Lot Goes To Sodom (13:10-13)

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it
was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom
and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of
Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar [[Gen. 13:10](#)].

That was a beautiful spot in those days.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east:
and they separated themselves the one from the other.

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities
of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom [[Gen. 13:11-12](#)].

This is interesting. Probably during all the time Lot spent in that land with Abram, at night he would push back the flap of his tent and look out and say to Mrs. Lot, "Isn't that a beautiful spot down there?" In the morning he would get up and say, "My, it looks so attractive down there!" The grass is always greener in the other pasture. When the day came that Lot could make a decision and go, you know the direction he went. No man falls suddenly. It always takes place over a period of time. You lift the flap of your tent, and you pitch your tent toward Sodom -- and that's the beginning. Lot lifted up his eyes,

he saw the plain, and he headed in that direction. That is the biggest mistake he ever made in his life.

Lot did not know this:

But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly [[Gen. 13:13](#)].

We will see later what happened to Lot and Mrs. Lot and the family down in Sodom.

God Appears To Abraham And Reaffirms His Promise (13:14-18)

And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward [[Gen. 13:14](#)].

"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him" -- here is the third appearance of God to this man.

"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward." This is the land God is going to give him. As God continued to appear to Abram and later on to the other patriarchs, God put sideboards around that land. In other words, He put a border to it and told them exactly what the land was. He was very specific about it.

May I just interject this thought? This ought to get rid of that song, "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere." If there ever was a song that needed not to be sung at a funeral, that is the one. Can you imagine Abram looking northward, eastward, southward, and westward and singing "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere" when he was standing right in the middle of it? Heaven is a real place as truly as the Promised Land is a real place -- not a beautiful isle of somewhere. It is a very definite place about which the Word of God is quite specific. In the Book of Revelation God makes it so specific; He puts the boundary right around it, and we can know something about it. God does not deal with that which is theoretical, but with that which is actual and real.

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered [[Gen. 13:15-16](#)].

Notice what God does for this man. He labels the land and tells Abram that he is in it. He also again confirms the fact that Abram is going to have a tremendous offspring -- which he has had.

Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee [[Gen. 13:17](#)].

It is very interesting that one of the Dead Sea Scrolls describes this particular section of Genesis, and it gives a first-person account by Abraham of the land. It was a wonderful land in that day.

Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD [[Gen. 13:18](#)].

Abram was quite an altar builder. You could always tell where Abram had been because he left a testimony. Man has left a footprint on the moon. They've left a flag up there and a little motto saying, "We have come in peace" -- but they did not leave the Bible, the Word of God. That reveals the difference between the thinking of Abram and the thinking of the age and period in which we live today. The important thing to Abram was an altar to the Lord, and that is exactly what he built.

One of the meanings of Mamre is "richness," and Hebron means "communion." That is a marvelous place to dwell. In our day we can be fairly certain that we have located the tree where Abram was, and the well that is there -- I have been there. It is quite an interesting spot between Hebron and Mamre, and that is where Abram dwelt. It is a good place to be: in the place of richness and of communion with God. This seems to have been Abram's home, and this is where he is buried.

Chapter 14

THEME: Kings of the east capture Sodom and Gomorrah; Abraham delivers Lot; Abraham refuses booty

In chapter 14 we find the first recorded war, one in which Abram delivers Lot; and we find the appearance of the first priest, at which time Abram is blessed by Melchizedek. These are the two great truths that are here. In one sense, this is a most remarkable chapter. It does not seem to fit in with the story at all. It seems that it could be left out, that there is a continuity without it. But it is one of the most important chapters in the Book of Genesis.

Kings Of The East Capture Sodom And Gomorrah (14:1-12)

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;

That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar [[Gen. 14:1-2](#)].

First of all, let me say that this is a historical document. In the first eleven verses, it is recorded that the kings of the east defeat the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. For quite a few years, the critical, radical scholars rejected this, saying that these men's names do not appear in secular history at all and that this is a rather ridiculous story. But did you know that the names of these kings have been found on monuments and tablets, showing that they did exist? In fact, Amraphel is now known to be the Hammurabi of other secular history. The record that we have here is tremendously significant.

There was war, and this is the first war that is mentioned in Scripture. Mankind began early in making war. Although this is the first war recorded, I do not know that it is the

first war that ever took place -- I do not think that the writer intends to give that impression. The reason it is recorded is because Lot, the nephew of Abram, is involved.

All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.

Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled [[Gen. 14:3-4](#)].

The rebellion is what brought the kings of the east against Sodom and Gomorrah. These kings evidently had fought before, because the kings of the east had subjugated these cities of the plain, but the cities had reached the place of rebellion. In [verses 5-11](#) we read the account of how the kings of the east overcame the kings who had joined together around the lower part of the Dead Sea.

And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed [[Gen. 14:12](#)].

Lot lived in Sodom and was taken captive. The reason this war is significant to the record here is that it reveals what Abram is going to do in connection with his nephew.

Abraham Delivers Lot (14:13-20)

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eschol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram [[Gen. 14:13](#)].

When the kings of the east left the area of Sodom and Gomorrah with their captives, they moved north along the west bank of the Dead Sea, which was not too far from Hebron and Mamre where Abram was dwelling. You can stand where Abram stood in that day and see any movement that takes place down toward the Dead Sea. So that when word was brought to Abram, he immediately began to pursue the enemy as he moved north.

"And these were confederate with Abram." Notice that Abram has a group of men that are with him. They had to stand together in that day because of the pursuit or the approach of an enemy. They either had to hang together or hang separately.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan [[Gen. 14:14](#)].

This is startling, and it reveals something of the extent of Abram's possessions. This gives you some conception of the number of servants Abram had. In his own household, he could arm 318. How many did he have that he could not arm? For instance, there would also be women and children and the old folk -- but he could arm 318. To have that many hired hands indicates that Abram was carrying on quite a business of raising cattle and sheep.

"And pursued them unto Dan" -- Dan is up in the north.

And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus [[Gen. 14:15](#)].

Abram pursued these men all the way north to Damascus -- that is quite a stretch. Apparently, what Abram did was to divide his servants. One group made an attack, probably from the rear as they were pursuing them. The other group went around, and when the enemy turned to fight the first group, the second group came down upon them. As a result, Abram was able to get a victory. At least he was able to scatter them so that they fled across the desert, leaving the people and the booty they had captured.

And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people [[Gen. 14:16](#)].

You see that they were taking the women and the other people as slaves. Abram has done a tremendous thing, and he has done it because of his nephew Lot. That is the reason all of this is mentioned here. This is very definitely not an extraneous chapter. It is a part of the life of Abram, and it is very important.

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale [[Gen. 14:17](#)].

The king of Sodom went out to meet Abram. But now someone else is going to come out and meet Abram, and it is a good thing that he did, because the king of Sodom is going to put a grave temptation before Abram.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth [[Gen. 14:18-19](#)].

I have several questions here, and I am sure that you do. To begin with, where in the world did this man Melchizedek come from? He just walks out on the page of Scripture with bread and wine, he blesses Abram, and then he walks off the page of Scripture -- that's it. I wonder where he came from. I wonder where he is going, and I wonder what his business is.

I find out that he is king of Salem, but he is also priest of the most high God. But now I have another question: How did he find out about "the most high God"? He found out somewhere. El Elohim is the most high God, the Creator of heaven and earth; in other words, the living God, the God of [Genesis 1](#), the God of Noah, and the God of Enoch. This is the One -- He is not a local deity. H. C. Leupold in his book on Genesis says that this is "strictly a monotheistic conception." Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer, in his *Origin of Religion*, says that this reveals that there was monotheism before polytheism. In other words, all men had a knowledge of the living and true God. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" ([Rom. 1:21](#)). Paul goes on to say that

men continued to go down to the point where they began to worship the creature more than the Creator.

Yet back in Abram's day here is a man who is high priest for the world of that day. He has a knowledge of the living and true God. He is a priest of the living and true God. He comes out, bringing bread and wine to Abram -- those are the elements of the Lord's Supper! I wonder what he had in mind? How much did Melchizedek know?

Melchizedek is mentioned three times in Scripture. In addition to this passage in Genesis, he is also mentioned in [Psalm 110:4](#), which is prophetic of Christ: ". . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Finally, he is mentioned several times in Hebrews. After reading Hebrews, I know why nothing is said about his origin in Genesis. Nothing is said about his parents, and that is strange because the Book of Genesis is the book of families. It tells about the beginnings of these families. Every time we see mentioned a man who is important in the genealogical line (as this man Melchizedek is), his parents are mentioned. "He is the son of So-and-So," or "these are the generations of So-and-So." But we do not have the generations of Melchizedek. The writer to the Hebrews makes it very clear that the reason there is no record of Melchizedek's father or mother or beginning or ending of days is because the priesthood of Christ, in its inception, is after the order of Melchizedek. In service -- in what our Lord did in the sacrifice of Himself and in His entering the Holy of Holies, which is heaven today -- Christ's priesthood follows the order of Aaron. But in His person, our Lord had no beginning or ending of days, and His priesthood follows the order of Melchizedek. As King, Christ is son of Abraham, He is son of David -- the Gospel of Matthew tells us that. But in the Gospel of John we read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" ([John 1:1, 14](#)). He had no beginning or ending of days as far as creation is concerned -- He is the eternal God. He came out of heaven's glory, the Word was made flesh, and we beheld His glory. We have in Melchizedek a marvelous picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Brought forth bread and wine." I know now why Melchizedek does this. It is because the Scriptures say, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" ([1Cor. 11:26](#)). Melchizedek is anticipating the death of Christ here!

On that basis he blessed Abram: "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" -- El Elohim, the Creator. This man was the high priest of the world in that day. The Lord Jesus is the great High Priest for the world today. The Lord Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek -- not Aaron -- as set forth here. Aaron was just for Israel and just for a tabernacle. In His person, Christ is after the order of Melchizedek.

*And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine
enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all [[Gen. 14:20](#)].*

Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek here at the very beginning. How did he know about paying tithes? Obviously, he had a revelation from God concerning this -- as well as concerning other matters.

Abraham Refuses Booty (14:21-24)

And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself [[Gen. 14:21](#)].

This is the temptation. According to the Code of Hammurabi of that day, this man Abram had a perfect right to the booty and even to the persons. But the king of Sodom is clever; he says, "Give us the persons, and you take the booty -- it's yours." That was a temptation to Abram. Forever after, when anybody would say, "That man Abram is certainly a wealthy man. God has blessed him," I think that the king of Sodom would have said, "Blessed him, my foot! God didn't bless him. I gave it to him; I'm the one who made him rich!" Abram knew that. Listen to him now:

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth [[Gen. 14:22](#)].

Abram is still under the influence and the blessing of Melchizedek, and it is a good thing he met Melchizedek. God always prepares us for any temptation that comes to us. He says that He will never let any temptation come to us that we are not able to bear (see [1Cor. 10:13](#)). God had prepared Abram for this one.

That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich [[Gen. 14:23](#)].

When Abram started out, he made a covenant with God, probably saying, "Oh, God, I am not entering this war in order to get booty. I'm not after possessions. I want to restore and recover my nephew Lot." And God permitted him to do that. Now Abram tells this to the king of Sodom as a witness to him. Abram could have said, "I worship the living and the true God. I have taken an oath that I would not take anything. You can't make me rich. I won't let you give me a shoestring or a piece of thread because, if you did even that, you would run around and say that you made me rich. If I get rich, God will have to do it."

Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eschol, and Mamre; let them take their portion [[Gen. 14:24](#)].

But Abram says, "These other men have a right to the booty, and they can have it; but I am not taking anything. What the young men who are with me have eaten is their pay for serving you and delivering you. But as for me -- you cannot give me a thing."

Chapter 15

THEME: God's revelation of Himself as shield and reward; Abraham's faith; God's covenant with Abraham

God's Revelation Of Himself As Shield And Reward (15:1-5)

We come to one of the high points of the Bible here in chapter 15.

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward [[Gen. 15:1](#)].

This now is the fourth time that God has appeared to Abram. God is developing this man and bringing him farther along. God does well to appear to him now because Abram has taken a tremendous step of faith in going out and rescuing Lot and in turning down the booty which the king of Sodom offered him.

"Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield." My friend, this is lovely; this is wonderful. The record does not tell us this, but let me suggest to you that perhaps during the battle, Abram got in real danger and wondered whether he would come out of it alive. God simply reminds him, "I'm your shield, Abram. I'm your shield."

"And thy exceeding great reward." In other words, God says, "You did well to turn down the booty. I am your reward; I intend to reward you." Oh, what God can do with a man today when he is willing just to believe God and look to Him!

If you think Abram is one of these pious boys who gets his halo shined every morning, you are wrong. Abram is very practical, and he is going to get right down to the nitty-gritty now. I think that God likes us to do that. I wish that we could get rid of this false piety and the hypocritical attitude that so many fundamentalists assume today. Notice what this man Abram says -- it is quite wonderful:

And Abram said, LORD God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir [[Gen. 15:2-3](#)].

What Abram is saying to God is this: "I don't want more riches; I don't need that. The thing that's on my heart is that I'm childless and I want a son. You have promised to make me a father of nations and that my offspring will be as numberless as the sand on the seashore. But I don't even have one child!" According to the law of the day, the Code of Hammurabi, Eliezer, his steward, his head servant, who had an offspring, would in time inherit if Abram did not have a child.

And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir [[Gen. 15:4](#)].

God is very practical when a man will be practical with Him. He says, "I am going to give you a son, Abraham. I am going to give you a son."

Now God took Abram by the hand and brought him forth into the night.

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be [[Gen. 15:5](#)].

This is remarkable. First God said to him that his offspring would be as numberless as the sand on the seashore, and now He says they will be as numberless as the stars in heaven.

Abram could not number the stars. He could see approximately four thousand, but there were probably over fifty thousand in that area where he was looking. Abram couldn't number his offspring, and you couldn't do it today.

This man Abram actually has two seeds. He has a physical seed, the nation Israel, and he has a spiritual seed, the church. How does the church become Abraham's spiritual seed? By faith. Paul told the Galatians that they were the sons of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ -- not in a natural line, but a spiritual seed (see [Gal. 3:29](#)).

I had the privilege of speaking to a group of very fine young Jewish men many years ago in Nashville, Tennessee. I had known some of them before I was saved and had been a very close friend of theirs. I spoke on the glories of the Mosaic Law and told them that the fulfillment of it was in Christ. I began by telling them I was glad to speak to them because I knew that they were sons of Abraham. But when I told them I was a son of Abraham also, they looked in amazement one to another. And then I told them how I was a son of Abraham. Included in God's promise were these two seeds of Abraham, and this is a very wonderful truth.

Abraham's Faith (15:6)

And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness [[Gen. 15:6](#)].

This is one of the greatest statements in the Scriptures: "And he believed in the LORD." What this means is that Abram said amen to God. God has said, "I will do this for you," and Abram says to God, "I believe You. Amen. I believe it." And that was counted to him for righteousness.

Paul speaks of this in his Epistle to the Romans: "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" ([Rom. 4:1-5](#)). "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found" - or, that Abraham has found as pertaining to the flesh. I think that rewording brings out the meaning better.

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it [that is, his faith] was counted unto him for righteousness" -- for that is what it was not, but that is what God counted it.

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." If you can work for your salvation, then God owes it to you. But, my friend, God never saves by any other means except grace. He has never had any other method of saving, and if you ever get saved, it will be because you believe God, you accept Christ as your Savior, and you believe that God has provided salvation for you.

"But to him that worketh not [no works at all], but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly [What kind of folk? Ungodly folk.], his faith is counted for righteousness." His faith is counted for what it is not, that is, for righteousness.

Abraham just believed God. He just accepted what God said, and he believed God. That is the way you get saved: to believe that God has done something for you, that Christ died for you and rose again. God will declare you righteous by simply accepting Christ.

In the third chapter of Galatians, we have this same great truth: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" ([Gal. 3:6-9](#)). The faith which Abraham had made him faithful to God, but he was not saved by being faithful. He was saved by believing God. This is all-important for us to see.

God's Covenant With Abraham (15:7-21)

And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

And he said, LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? [[Gen. 15:7-8](#)].

Again, Abram is a very practical man. He believes in dealing with reality, and I think we need to do that. We need reality today in our Christian lives. If reality is not in your life, there is nothing there. A great many people just play church today. Abram is very practical. He wants to know something, and he would like to have something in writing.

Do you know what God is probably going to tell him? God is going to say, "Abram, I'm glad you asked Me, because I am going to meet you down at the courthouse; I will go before a notary public, and I will make real this contract which I am making with you. You are going to have a son. Meet Me down there, and I will sign on the dotted line." Now, before you write me a letter and protest, let me say that you are right, that the Bible says nothing about God meeting Abram at the courthouse, and it says nothing about going to a notary public, but in the terms of the law of our day, that is exactly what God said to Abram.

Here is what God told Abram to do:

And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not [[Gen. 15:9-10](#)].

God told Abram to prepare a sacrifice. He was to get a heifer, a she goat, and a ram and divide or split them down the middle and put one half on one side and one half on the

other. The turtledove and the pigeon he did not divide, but put one over here and one over there.

When men made a contract in that day, this is the way they made it. Suppose one man agreed to buy sheep from another one. They would prepare a sacrifice in this manner. The party of the first part joined hands with the party of the second part, they stated their contract, and then they walked through the sacrifice. In that day this corresponded to going down to the courthouse and signing before a notary public in our day. So we see that God is using with Abram the legal procedure of his day.

In [Jeremiah 34:18](#) we have a reference to this custom that was prevalent in that land, not just among these people, but among all peoples in the day: "And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof." The method in that day was to take the sacrifice and divide it, and the men would then make the contract.

Notice Abram got everything ready according to God's instructions.

And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away [[Gen. 15:11](#)].

This is a very human scene. Abram gets everything ready, and while he is waiting for the Lord, the fowls of the air come down -- the buzzard and the crow come down upon the carrion. Abram is there shoosing them away, for they are ready to swoop down upon the sacrifice. If you had been there and had seen all this display of the sacrifices, knowing the custom of the day, you might have said, "Well, brother Abram, apparently the one you're making a contract with hasn't shown up. I guess he's late!" Abram would have said, "No, I don't think He's late. He just told me to get things ready and that He would be here to make the contract."

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him [[Gen. 15:12](#)].

Abram is paralyzed in sleep and put aside. It seems very strange that God would paralyze him in sleep when he is supposed to be making a contract, but this is an unusual contract. God is going to go through the sacrifices because God is promising something, but Abram is not going to go through because Abram is not promising to do a thing. Abram just believed God -- that's all.

That is exactly what took place over nineteen hundred years ago when God sent His Son. God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. And the Son agreed to come to the earth and die for the sins of the world -- your sin and mine -- that whosoever would believe in Him (simply accept His gift) might not perish but have everlasting life (see [John 3:16](#)). I wasn't even there nineteen hundred years ago to make a contract, but God the Father and God the Son were there, and the Son went to the Cross, and He died for my sins. I was paralyzed by sin. I could not promise anything, and you couldn't either.

Abram did not promise anything either. Suppose that God had said to Abram, "Abram if you will just promise to say your prayers every night, I am going to do this for you." And suppose Abram forgot to pray one night. The contract is shot -- it's broken -- and therefore God does not need to make His part good. But God said that He would do His part, and He is asking man to do just one thing: to say amen to Him -- that is, to believe Him. You are to believe God and believe what He has done. My friend, to believe God is salvation.

Years ago there was a dear little Scottish mother whose son had gone away to college in Glasgow and had come back an unbeliever. She talked with the boy and told about how wonderful God was and that she was sure of her salvation. The son had become skeptical, and he was a little provoked. Finally he said, "How do you know you're saved? Your little soul doesn't amount to anything." He began to compare her to the vastness of the universe and said that God could forget all about her and she couldn't be sure of her salvation. She didn't say anything, but just kept serving the boy's breakfast. Finally, when she had finished, she sat down with him and said, "You know, son, I've been thinking about it. Maybe you're right. Maybe my little soul doesn't amount to much. Maybe in the vastness of God's universe, He wouldn't miss me at all. But if He doesn't save me, He's going to lose more than I'm going to lose. I would lose only my insignificant little soul, but He would lose His reputation because He promised to save my soul. He agreed to do it: 'that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' " God is the One who went through; God made the contract.

And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years [[Gen. 15:13](#)].

In the Scriptures it is predicted that the Hebrew people would be put out of the land three times. This is the first time. It is also predicted that they would return back to the land, and they did this time. Later on it was the Babylonian captivity. They were carried into captivity, and they returned. In B.C. 70 Jerusalem was destroyed, and for the third time they were scattered. They have never returned from that. Their current presence in the land is by no means a fulfillment of Scripture. But according to the Word of God, they will come back someday exactly as it predicts.

And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age [[Gen. 15:14-15](#)].

They did come out of Egypt with great substance, but Abram would not live to see it, of course.

But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full [[Gen. 15:16](#)].

God is saying to Abram, "I cannot put you in this land now because I love Amorites also, and I want to give them a chance to turn to Me." And God gave the Amorites four hundred years -- that is a long time, is it not? -- to see if they would turn to Him. The only one in that land who turned to Him was that Canaanite woman, Rahab the harlot. She

turned to God; she believed Him. All God asks you to do is to believe Him. God gave the Amorites this great period of opportunity.

And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces [[Gen. 15:17](#)].

Both of these speak of Christ. The furnace, of course, speaks of judgment. The lamp speaks of Him as the light of the world.

In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites [[Gen. 15:18-21](#)].

God now marks out the land that He is promising to Abram. By the way, what did Abram promise to do? Nothing. He believed God. And God will save you -- save you by grace -- if you will believe what He has done for you.

Chapter 16

THEME: Sarai's suggestion; Hagar flees; the tests of Abraham

As we come to this chapter, I must confess that I almost wish it were not in the Bible. After Abram rose to the heights in chapter 15, you would say that he certainly is treading on high places -- but he is not perfect. In chapter 16 we see the lapse of this man's faith relative to Sarai and Hagar, the Egyptian maid. We have here the unbelief of both Sarai and Abram, and the birth of Ishmael. This is certainly a letdown after the wonder of the previous chapter.

Sarai's Suggestion (16:1-5)

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar [[Gen. 16:1](#)].

Abram got two things down in the land of Egypt which really caused him trouble: one was wealth, and the other was this little Egyptian maid.

And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai [[Gen. 16:2](#)].

The thing that Sarai suggested was the common practice of that day. When a wife could not bear a child, there was the concubine. Now don't say that God approved it. God did not approve of this at all. This was Sarai's idea, and Abram listened to her. It looks like he is surrendering his position as head of the home here, and he followed her suggestion.

And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife [[Gen. 16:3](#)].

This little Egyptian maid becomes a concubine, and this is not according to God's will. God is not going to accept the offspring at all -- He didn't; He wouldn't. Why? Because it was wrong. Don't say that God approved this. All you can say is that this is in the record because it is an historical fact.

And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes [[Gen. 16:4](#)].

Hagar said, "I've mothered a child of Abram, and Sarai couldn't do it." She looked down on Sarai, you see.

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee [[Gen. 16:5](#)].

Don't pass this verse by. Don't assume that God approved of this. God says that it is wrong, and now Sarai sees that she has done wrong. "My wrong be upon thee" -- she is wrong, my friend. God will not accept this, and it is going to be a real heartbreak to old Abram. But, you see, Abram and Sarai are not really trusting God as they should. After all, Abram at this time is nearly ninety years old and Sarai eighty. I think they have come to the conclusion that they are not going to have a child. Sarai could probably rationalize and say, "I think maybe this is the way God wants us to do it, for this is the custom of the day." It was the custom of that day, but it was contrary to God's way of doing things. We get the wrong impression if we think that just because something is recorded in the Bible God approves of it. The Bible is inspired in that it is an accurate record, but there are many things God does not approve of that are recorded in His Word.

The moral implications that you and I read into this are not quite here in the historical record. Abram and Sarai were brought up in Ur of the Chaldees where this was a common practice, and the moral angle is not the thing that for them was so wrong. The terrible thing was that they just did not believe God. The wrong that they committed by Abram taking Sarai's maid Hagar was a sin, and God treated it as such. But today we reverse the emphasis and say that taking a concubine is a sin, but we do not pay too much attention to the unbelief. Yet the unbelief was the major sin here; that is, it was lots blacker than the other.

Hagar Flees (16:6-16)

But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face [[Gen. 16:6](#)].

Hagar took off -- she ran away -- and this would probably have meant death to her and certainly to the child she was carrying.

And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur [[Gen. 16:7](#)].

I am inclined to believe that the Angel of the Lord is none other than the preincarnate Christ. This is characteristic of Him: He is always out looking for the lost. Hagar had traveled quite a distance from home.

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude [[Gen. 16:8-10](#)].

In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul uses this as an allegory. He speaks there of Hagar and her offspring as being Mount Sinai where the Mosaic law was given, and he speaks of the legality and the bondage of that law. Then he speaks of Sarai as being the one who is free. The point is that the one who belonged to Abram was Sarai - she was his wife. Many people today want to take on something different; they want to get under the law. But, my friend, as believers we have been joined to Christ. The church has been espoused to Christ, Paul says, as a chaste virgin and will someday be the bride of Christ. Therefore may I say to you, you do not want to take on the law. The law is another one that you and I just don't need; it is like Hagar, and that is the point that Paul is making in Galatians.

This is going to be a great sorrow, not only to Sarai (it already has been to her), but it is going to be an even greater sorrow to Abram later on. Hagar now comes back to give birth to a boy, that boy who happens to be Abram's son.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren [[Gen. 16:11-12](#)].

Have you looked at this verse in light of about four thousand years of history in the Middle East? What is going on out there today? The descendants of Ishmael are wild men -- that has been the story of those Bedouin tribes of the desert down through the centuries, and it is a fulfillment of the prophecy that God gave. They will tell you that they are sons of Abraham, but they are also sons of Ishmael. They are related to Abraham through Ishmael.

And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me; for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered [[Gen. 16:13-14](#)].

How gracious God is to Hagar! It is not her sin, so God very graciously deals with her. Let me repeat that I believe the Angel of the Lord here is none other than the preincarnate Christ gone out to seek the lost again. He's that kind of Shepherd, and He brings to her this good word.

"And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me." This is something new to her that she did not realize before. The Egyptians did have a very primitive idea and conception of God. "For she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" She is overwhelmed by the fact that she is seen of God. That doesn't seem to be very impressive to us today because we have a higher view of God than that. But wait just a minute! We probably come just as far short of really knowing about God as Hagar did. It is difficult for a little, finite man to conceive of the infinite God, and all of us come short of understanding and of knowing Him. I think that a theme which will engage us throughout the endless ages of eternity is just coming to know God. That is worthy of any man's study. To come to know God is something that will dignify a man's position throughout eternity.

And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram [[Gen. 16:15-16](#)].

Remember that Ishmael was Abram's son. Abram was now eighty-six years old.

The Tests Of Abraham (16:6-16)

Before we go farther, I would like to make a recapitulation of the seven appearances of God to Abram, five of which we have already seen. There were certain failures in the life of Abram, but also there were successes. Actually, there were seven tests which God gave to him:

- (1) God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, his home, and Abram responded partially. His faith was weak and imperfect, but at least he moved out. Abram finally arrived safely in the land of Canaan, and God blessed him.
- (2) Then there was a famine in the land of Canaan, and Abram fled from the land of Canaan to Egypt. There he acquired riches and Hagar -- and both were stumbling blocks.
- (3) Abram was given riches which are a real test. They have been a stumbling block to many a man, by the way. Frankly, I have always wished that the Lord would have let me have that kind of test rather than some of the others I've had! But nevertheless, I'm of the opinion that He could not have trusted me with riches. Abram did not forget God, and he was certainly generous and magnanimous toward his nephew Lot. Riches resulted in his separation from Lot, and God appeared to him again.
- (4) Abram was given power through his defeat of the kings of the east. That was a real test, for he happened to be the conqueror. This man Melchizedek met him, which I think

strengthened Abram for the test, and so he refused the spoils of war. Afterwards, God appeared to Abram and encouraged him.

(5) God delayed giving Abram a son by his wife Sarai. Abram became impatient, and through the prompting of Sarai, he took matters into his own hands and moved outside the will of God. As a result, there was the birth of Ishmael. The Arabs of the desert today still plague the nation Israel, and they will keep right on doing that, I think, until the Millennium.

Abraham's two final tests occur (6) at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in chapter 18 and (7) at the offering of his son Isaac in chapter 22.

Chapter 17

THEME: God gives Abraham a new name; God's covenant; Ishmael's inheritance

A great many people feel that the seventeenth chapter is the most outstanding chapter of the Book of Genesis. Here God makes a covenant with Abram and confirms His promise to him about a son. He lets Abram know that Ishmael is not the one He promised to him. In one sense this chapter is the key to the Book of Genesis, and it may be a key to the entire Bible. God's covenant with Abram concerns two important items: a seed and a land. He reveals Himself to Abram by a new name -- El Shaddai, the Almighty God -- and He also gives Abram a new name. Up to this point his name was Abram; now it is changed to Abraham. Abram means "high father," and Abraham means "father of a multitude." That Ishmael was not the son God promised to Abraham is the thing this chapter makes very clear.

God Gives Abraham A New Name (17:1-5)

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect [[Gen. 17:1](#)].

Think of that! Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born, and it was not until fourteen years later that Isaac was born.

"The LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." God says, "I am El Shaddai, the Almighty God" -- this is a new name.

And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly [[Gen. 17:2](#)].

Thirteen times in this chapter we find the word covenant. For it to appear thirteen times in twenty-seven verses obviously means that God is talking about the covenant. This is God's fifth appearance to Abram. He comes now not only to make the covenant, but also to reaffirm the promise of a son that He has made, which absolutely rules out this boy Ishmael, of course.

Paul, writing in the fourth chapter of Romans, says this: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb" ([Rom. 4:19](#)).

Sarah's womb actually was a tomb -- it was the place of death. And out of death came life: Isaac was born. Paul concludes that fourth chapter by saying this about the Lord Jesus: "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" ([Rom. 4:25](#)). Life out of death -- that is the promise God is now making to this man. Abram is 99 years old, and that means that Sarai is 89 years old. When Isaac was born, Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90.

And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations [[Gen. 17:3-4](#)].

God says to Abram that he will be a father of many nations. I suppose it could be said that this man has probably had more children than any other man that has ever lived on the earth, as far as we know. Just think of it: for four thousands years, there have been two great lines -- the line of Ishmael and the line of Isaac -- and there have been millions in each line. What a family! What a homecoming! Added to that, there is a spiritual seed, for we Christians are called the children of Abraham by faith in Christ. In [Romans 4:16](#), speaking of Abraham, Paul says, ". . . who is the father of us all" -- that is, of believers, of the nation Israel, and also of the Arabs, by the way. Just think of the millions of people! God says here, "I am going to make you a father of many nations," and He has made that promise good.

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee [[Gen. 17:5](#)].

Abram means "high father" or "father of the height" or "exalted father." Abraham means "father of a multitude."

I am going to inject a little story here to illustrate to you something of the faith of this man Abram. Suppose that one morning Abram and Sarai get up, and as they are working around the tent there suddenly appears a group of traders at their little oasis created by the spring at Hebron. Abram goes out to meet them, and they want to know if they can water their camels.

There were many hospitable people in that day, and that is quite interesting. We speak of the caveman way back yonder and how terrible he was. May I say to you, in that day a stranger could not go through the country without somebody opening his home and entertaining him. But if you came into Los Angeles as a stranger, I don't know anybody who would take you in, although there are a lot of Christians in this area. Our culture is altogether different today, and we certainly lack the hospitality they had in that day.

Abram goes out to meet them, and the conversation probably sounded like this: "Sure, help yourselves, and I'll feed your stock. Would you like to stay for awhile?" They say, "No, we're on a business trip and are in a hurry to get down to Egypt."

One of the men then says, "My name is Allah," and the other says, "My name is Ali Baba. What's your name?" When Abram replies, "My name is High Father," the men exclaim, "My! Boy or girl?" Abram says, "I don't have any children." The men just laugh and say, "You mean to tell us that you don't have any children and your name is Abram? How in the world can you be a father and not have children?" And they ride off across the desert, laughing.

Six months later, they come by again. When he goes out to greet them again, they all begin to laugh, "Hello there, High Father!" But he says, "My name is not High Father anymore. It is now Father of a Multitude." The traders say, "My, must have been twins!" And then they really laugh when Abraham says, "No, I still don't have any children." They say, "How ridiculous can that be?"

Here was a man who was a father before he had any children. Abraham was Abraham, father of a multitude, by faith at that time. But four thousand years later, where you and I sit, we can say that God sure made this good. The name stuck, if you please, and he is still Abraham, the father of a multitude.

God's Covenant (17:6-19)

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee [[Gen. 17:6-7](#)].

What kind of covenant did God make with Abraham? An everlasting covenant. If it is everlasting, is it good today? It certainly is. God promised you and me everlasting life if we will trust Christ -- that is a covenant God has made. My friend, if God is not going to make good this covenant that He made with Abraham, you had better look into yours again. But I have news for you: He is going to make your covenant good, and He is also going to make Abraham's good.

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God [[Gen. 17:8](#)].

God tells Abraham what He will do. God says, "I will." "I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee. . . . And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed. . . . And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee . . . all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."

God has made a covenant with these people that is an everlasting covenant. Since it is, it is not one that will be easily broken, and it is not one that is going to run out. God did not give them a ninety-nine-year lease on the land. God gave them an everlasting possession.

The Hebrew people have been in that land on three occasions, and it is theirs, but the important thing is that they occupy it only under certain conditions. First of all, God sent them down into the land of Egypt, and they were dispersed there. They went down a family of about seventy and came out a nation of at least one and one-half million. They

were put out of their land again at the Babylonian captivity because they went into idolatry and were not witnessing for God. We find that they again went out of the land in B.C. 70 after they had rejected their Messiah. Actually, they have never been back. God predicted that three times they would be put out of the land and three times they would be returned. They have been returned twice. (I do not consider the present return to the land a fulfillment.) When they return the next time, I take it that it means they will never go out of the land again. The Millennium will take place when God gathers and brings them back into the land.

And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you [[Gen. 17:9-11](#)].

Circumcision is the badge of the covenant. The Israelites did not circumcise themselves in order to become members of the covenant. They did this because they had the covenant from God. Circumcision occupied the same place that good works occupy for the believer today. You do not perform good works in order to be saved; you perform good works because you have been saved. That makes all the difference in the world.

When I went away from home as a boy, although I did get into a lot of trouble, the one thing that kept me from becoming an absolute renegade was the thought of my dad. I said to myself, "Because I'm a son of my father, I won't do this or enter into that." I refrained from things because of my dad. Now, I did not become his son because I did not do certain things. I already was his son. But because I was his son, I didn't do them. The badge of the covenant was circumcision. The thing that put them under the covenant wasn't circumcision, but circumcision was the badge of it, the evidence of it.

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed [[Gen. 17:12](#)].

Have you noticed how meticulous the record concerning the birth of Christ is? All the law was fulfilled in connection with the birth of this little baby. It is recorded that He was the son of Abraham, the son of David; He was in the line, and on the eighth day He was circumcised. He was "born under the law," Paul says in [Galatians 4:4](#).

He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant [[Gen. 17:13](#)].

Again, circumcision is the badge of the covenant. They did not have to do this in order to get the covenant; God had already made the covenant with them. I trust that you see this because it is so important. The same thing is true today. A great many people think that, if they join the church or are baptized, they will be saved. No, my friend, you don't do those things to get saved. If you are saved, I think you will do both of them -- you'll join a

church, and you'll be baptized -- but you don't do that to get saved. We need to keep the cart where it belongs, following the horse, and not get the cart before the horse. For in fact, in the thinking of many relative to salvation, the horse is in the cart today.

And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant [[Gen. 17:14](#)].

The fact that there were those who disobeyed (practically the entire nation disobeyed when they came out of the land of Egypt) did not militate against the covenant. That disobedience simply meant that the individual would be put out. However, as far as the nation is concerned, no individual or group could destroy this covenant which God had made with Abraham and his seed after him. It is an everlasting covenant. The man who had broken the covenant was put out, but the covenant stood. That is how marvelous it is.

And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be [[Gen. 17:15](#)].

Her name was Sarai before; now it is changed to Sarah.

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her [[Gen. 17:16](#)].

If old Abraham is going to be a father of nations, then Sarah is going to be a mother of nations.

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? [[Gen. 17:17](#)].

Old Abraham just laughed. This is not the laughter of unbelief. I think it is the laughter of just sheer joy that this could happen. I am sure that you have had this experience. Every now and then in our lives, God does something for us that is so wonderful that we just feel like laughing. You don't know anything else to do but to laugh about it. This was something unheard of. There was "the deadness of Sarah's womb," and Abraham was "dead" -- have you ever noticed how Paul described this? "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body was now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" ([Rom. 4:17-22](#)). Abraham believed in God, and he is absolutely overwhelmed by the wonder and the goodness of God.

But then, all of a sudden, a thought comes to Abraham like an arrow to his heart. He thinks of a little boy who is his, a boy by the name of Ishmael.

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! [[Gen. 17:18](#)].

Abraham is saying, "Oh, Lord, this little fellow who has been growing up in my home . . . !" Abraham is attached to Ishmael. He was fourteen years old when Abraham sent him out a little later on. I do not think that Abraham ever saw him again. My friend, I don't care what you might think of Ishmael; he was Abraham's son, and Abraham loved his son. It was a heartbreak for him to have to give him up.

I am of the opinion that Abraham thought many, many times, "I made a great big mistake in taking Hagar." You see, that was a sin that not only plagued him, but there has also been trouble in that land from the beginning because Abraham sinned. Don't tell me that sin is a little thing or that sin is something you get by with. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" ([Gal. 6:7](#)). A man does not reap something similar; he reaps just that which he sowed. And this man Abraham is certainly reaping: "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him [[Gen. 17:19](#)].

In other words, God says, "No, I won't accept him. That was wrong." Don't say that God approved polygamy just because it is recorded in the Bible. I cannot see that He is approving it at all.

Ishmael's Inheritance (17:20-27)

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year [[Gen. 17:20-21](#)].

God holds to the promise that He has made. God is not to be deterred or deferred from this at all. He is going to do the exact thing that He said He would do. He speaks as if Isaac were already born and in their midst. He speaks of things that are not as if they are - and it is going to be next year.

And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham [[Gen. 17:22](#)].

In other words, Abraham, you might just as well keep quiet. God has already decided this. My friend, there are things which you and I might as well stop petitioning the Lord for. There are times when you've said enough and you don't need to say any more. Sometimes folk just pester the Lord in a prayer when they already have the answer -- which, of course, is No! God says to Abraham, "Let this alone, now. This is enough; you need not mention this anymore. I have not accepted it, and I do not intend to." God is going to hear and answer other prayers of Abraham. We will find that God listens to Abraham. However, in the case of His covenant, He is making it with Isaac not with Ishmael. That is settled, and Abraham might just as well stop trying to change God's

mind. A great many people today pray about things that God maybe does not intend to hear or answer at all. I try to be very careful about asking people to pray about certain things. I want at least to feel like there is a reasonable chance of God's hearing it and answering.

And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him [[Gen. 17:23-27](#)].

Circumcision is the badge of the covenant which God has made with Abraham. Someone will ask, "Why was Ishmael included?" Hasn't God promised that Ishmael is going to be a great nation also? He is included in it in that sense, but he is not the one whom God had promised to Abraham at the beginning. He is not to be the father of the nation that God will use and the nation through which the Messiah will come.

Chapter 18

THEME: God reaffirms His promise; God announces the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Until you get to the New Testament, you may wonder why the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of Genesis are included in the Bible. They seem rather detached from the story of Abraham. They deal with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Chapter 18 is a rather lengthy chapter in which God tells Abraham about the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah and Abraham intercedes on behalf of the cities of the plain. This is an illustration, I think, of the blessed Christian life, of life in fellowship with God. But in chapter 19, down in Sodom and Gomorrah with Lot, we will see what I would call the blasted life -- all because of a decision that was made.

Unfortunately, we have both kinds among Christians today -- those living a blessed life and those living a blasted life. There are those who have really made shipwreck of their lives; they have gotten entirely out of the will of God. I would not suggest even for a moment that they have lost their salvation, but they sure have lost everything else. As Paul says, they are saved, ". . . yet so as by fire" ([1Cor. 3:15](#)).

God Reaffirms His Promise (18:1-16)

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heart of they day [[Gen. 18:1](#)].

Abraham is living down there in Mamre, and he's an old man, by the way.

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground [[Gen. 18:2](#)].

Notice the hospitality that Abraham extends. The little story that I told in the previous chapter has a basis of fact, at least, although I don't think it ever took place. The point is that this man Abraham is a very gracious, hospitable man.

And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree [[Gen. 18:3-4](#)].

It seems very strange to us to tell a visiting stranger to wash his feet and come in. We wouldn't quite say that today, but this is probably the oldest custom that is known. Remember that in the Upper Room our Lord washed the disciples' feet -- and there is a tremendous spiritual message there. Here Abraham says, "Wash your feet." It was a token of real hospitality when someone came into a home to have him take off his shoes and wash his feet. In that day they did not take off their hat, but they did take off their shoes. Today we have reversed it. When you come to visit somebody, you leaves your shoes on and take off your hat. I'm not sure which is right. I like the idea, myself, of taking off my shoes. I like to go barefooted in the summertime. I wish it were possible more often. When I am out in the Hawaiian Islands, I put my shoes away and wear thongs or go barefooted as much as possible. I don't put my shoes back on the whole time I am there. I love to go barefooted. I think this was a great custom. It sure would make you feel at home to take off your shoes, wash your feet, and rest yourself under the shade of a tree. Abraham is really entertaining these men royally.

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat [[Gen. 18:5-8](#)].

Isn't this a marvelous way of entertaining? Abraham has prepared a sumptuous meal. He took a little calf, a servant killed and prepared it, and the chef probably barbecued it. They had veal steaks or veal roast, I imagine, and all the trimmings that went with it.

"And he took butter, and milk" -- my, it was a real feast! Abraham entertains these three guests.

Then we find that these guests are royal guests. In the New Testament it is suggested to us that ". . . some have entertained angels unawares" ([Heb. 13:2](#)). That was Abraham -- he didn't know whom he was really entertaining.

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent [[Gen. 18:9](#)].

It was not proper in that day -- and even in the East today -- for the wife to come out and be the one to entertain, especially since there were three male guests there. But now they ask and make inquiry about Sarah.

And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him [[Gen. 18:10](#)].

I think Sarah had her ear to the keyhole and had been listening in. Both Abraham and Sarah now discover that they are entertaining angels unaware.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? [[Gen. 18:11-12](#)].

That is, Sarah asks, "Is it possible that I will have a son?" -- and she laughs. Now what kind of laughter is this? I think this is the laughter which says that it is just too good to be true -- that's all. Again, I'm sure that most of us have had experiences like this. God has been so good to us on a certain occasion that we just laughed. Something happened that was just too good to be true, and that was the way Sarah laughed. She is saying, "This is something just too good to be true. It just can't happen to me!"

And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh [[Gen. 18:13-15](#)].

Sarah is frightened by the Lord's question and is certainly rather evasive, but she cannot avoid the truth.

And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way [[Gen. 18:16](#)].

Abraham didn't have a front gate, so he walked out with them a little farther than the front gate to bid them goodbye. And as they walked out from where Abraham lived, they could look down to Sodom and Gomorrah. When I was in that land, it was amazing to me how far you could see on a clear day. I could see from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. And from

the ruins of old Samaria, I could see Jerusalem, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Sea of Galilee. I could see Mt. Hermon from most anyplace -- it's tremendous. Abraham walked out a ways with these guests, and down below there, they saw Sodom and Gomorrah. They were the great resorts of that day, and they must have been very delightful and beautiful places to be.

God Announces The Coming Destruction Of Sodom And Gomorrah (18:17-33)

And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do [[Gen. 18:17](#)].

Up to this point, the Lord has not revealed to Abraham what He is going to do with Sodom and Gomorrah: He is going to destroy them. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?"

Notice now the reason that God is not going to hide it from Abraham.

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? [[Gen. 18:18](#)].

Abraham is going to have a tremendous influence. He is going to influence multitudes of people, including the succeeding generations. That is true right now today. As I write and as you read this book, Abraham is influencing us -- we cannot avoid it.

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him [[Gen. 18:19](#)].

God says, "I'd better not hide it from Abraham because he will get a wrong impression of Me." Notice by the way, that this man Abraham had discipline in his household.

And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know [[Gen. 18:20-21](#)].

In other words, God is saying to Abraham, "I know the situation there, but I'm going down to investigate." God never does anything hurriedly or hastily. It is a good thing that God told Abraham He was going to destroy these cities, because otherwise Abraham would have gotten a wrong impression of God. He would have thought that God was rather dictatorial and vindictive and that He was One who apparently showed no mercy for or consideration of those who were His. Abraham would really have had a distorted and warped view of God, and so God lets him know what He is going to do. Abraham now has time to turn this over in his mind. It is also a good thing that God told him because he did have a wrong idea of God and of Sodom and Gomorrah -- he was wrong about many things. This is one of the reasons that God is telling us as much as He is.

There are a lot of things that He does not tell us, but He has told us enough so that though a man be a fool and a wayfaring man, he needn't err therein.

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD [[Gen. 18:22](#)].

Abraham is now waiting before the Lord.

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? [[Gen. 18:23](#)].

What is the first thing that enters Abraham's mind? The first thing that enters his mind, of course, is Lot. He had rescued Lot once, and now Lot is again in danger down there. I think that Abraham had wondered many times about Lot and his relationship to God, but at least he believes that Lot is a saved man. He is asking God, "What about the righteous?" I believe that Abraham would have told you that he thought there were many people in the city of Sodom who were saved. He could not understand why God would destroy the righteous with the wicked. What a picture we have here!

Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? [[Gen. 18:24](#)].

Abraham begins with fifty. He says to the Lord, "Lord, suppose there are fifty righteous down there in Sodom. Would You destroy the city if there were fifty righteous?"

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? [[Gen. 18:25](#)].

That is still a question that many people ask: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And there is an answer to it. The rest of the Bible testifies to the fact that the Judge of all the earth always does right. Whatever God does is right, and if you don't think He is right, the trouble is not with God, but the trouble is with you and your thinking. You are thinking wrong; you do not have all the facts; you do not know all of the details. If you did, you would know that the Judge of all the earth does right. We are wrong; He is right.

And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes [[Gen. 18:26](#)].

And Abraham thinks this over.

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it [[Gen. 18:27-28](#)].

In other words, Abraham says, "If there are forty-five righteous left, would You destroy the city for forty-five?" And God tells him, "If I find there forty and five, I will not

destroy it." This makes the man a little bit bolder, and he says to the Lord, "Suppose there are forty?" The very interesting thing is that God says, "I will not destroy it for forty." And Abraham keeps on bringing the number down. He says, "How about thirty?" God says, "If there are thirty there, I still won't do it." Abraham says, "Suppose there are twenty there?" God says, "I'll not destroy it." Abraham is overwhelmed now, and he takes another plunge: "Suppose there are ten righteous there. Would You destroy it if there are ten?" And God says, "If there are ten righteous in the city, I will not destroy it."

And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place [[Gen. 18:33](#)].

Now the question arises: Why didn't Abraham come on down below ten? I'll tell you why: At this point he is afraid that Lot is lost, and this disturbs him a great deal; so he is not going to come down any further. But he could have come down to one. He could have said, "Lord, if there is one in that city who is righteous, would You destroy the city?" Do you know what God would have said? He would have said, "If there is one who is righteous in that city, I am going to get him out of that city, because I would not destroy a righteous man with the city." How do I know that is the way it would have been? Because that is the way it worked out. There was one righteous man there -- Abraham didn't believe it, but God knew him -- and that one was Lot. God said to Lot, "Get out of the city. I cannot destroy it until you are out."

Do you know that the Great Tribulation period cannot come as long as the church is in the world? It just cannot come, my friend, because Christ bore our judgment, and the great tribulation is part of the judgment that is coming. This is the reason that the church cannot go through it. This is a glorious picture of that truth. We are going to see that Sodom and Gomorrah are a picture of the world -- and what a picture! What a condition the world is in today -- it is very much like Sodom and Gomorrah. That does not mean that the Lord is going to come tomorrow. I do not know -- and no one else knows -- when He will come. But He could come tomorrow, and it certainly would be in keeping with the carrying out of the picture which is before us here in Genesis.

Chapter 19

THEME: The angels visit Lot; destruction of the Cities of the Plain

The preceding chapter was a picture of blessed Christian fellowship with God. But now the picture changes: We leave Hebron on the plains of Mamre where Abraham dwells and we go to the city of Sodom where Lot dwells. In this chapter Lot leaves Sodom with his wife and two daughters, and Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed. Lot's wife turns to a pillar of salt, and then we have Lot's awful sin with his two daughters.

In chapter 19 we have a picture of that which is "the blasted life." Don't forget that this man Lot happens to be a righteous man. It is hard to believe that; if I had only this record in Genesis, I wouldn't believe it. But Simon Peter, in his epistle, says of Lot, ". . . that righteous man . . . vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" ([2Pet. 2:8](#)). Lot lived in Sodom, but he never was happy there. It was a tragic day for him when he moved to Sodom, because he lost his family -- he lost all of them if you look at the total picture. It is tragic.

There is many a man today who may be a saved man, but due to his life style or where he lives, he loses his family, his influence, and his testimony. I have been a pastor for quite a few years, and I know Christians like Lot. Not too long ago, the son of a leader in a church which I served said to me that all he was doing was waiting for his dad to die in order to repudiate the Christian life. He thought the whole thing was phony; all he could see was hypocrisy. Of course, all he was doing was telling about his home. What a phony his dad must be! That man has lost his son, and he has lost his influence in other places, I can assure you. But I would not question his salvation. I think the man trusts Christ, but you would never know it by his life. Poor Lot! How tragic this is! This is one of two very sordid chapters in the Book of Genesis.

The Angels Visit Lot (19:1-20)

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground [[Gen. 19:1](#)].

These two angels visit Lot in Sodom to announce judgment. Notice that Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. I cannot let that go by without calling attention to the fact that the ones who sat in the gate of a city were the judges. This man Lot not only moved to Sodom, but he also got into politics down there. Here he is, a petty judge sitting in the gate.

And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night [[Gen. 19:2](#)].

These two men must have had dirty feet. Of course, if you had walked from the plains of Mamre down into Sodom wearing nothing but sandals, your feet would need washing, also. Again, I call your attention to this custom of that day which was practiced by those who extended hospitality to strangers.

Lot was a hospitable man. When these strangers came, he invited them to his home, and they came in. At first, however, they were reluctant. "And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night." In other words, they said, "We'll just stay outside. We don't want to inconvenience you." And they said this for a purpose, of course.

And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat [[Gen. 19:3](#)].

Now these men have another feast. They had a feast with Abraham; they now have a feast with Lot.

They had brought out something when they said, "We'll stay on the street and just sleep in the park," and Lot says to them, "You don't do that in Sodom. It's dangerous! Your life wouldn't be worth a thing if you did that." May I say that maybe Los Angeles ought to change its name to Sodom. It would not be safe for you to sleep on the streets of Los Angeles; in fact, it is not safe at all to be on the streets of Los Angeles at night. Many women who live alone will not come out to church at night. One dear saint of God told

me, "I just lock my door at dark, Brother McGee, and I do not open that door until the next morning at daylight. It's not safe in my neighborhood to even walk on the street." The days of Sodom and Gomorrah are here again, and practically for the same reason. Lot says, "No, men, do not stay on the street. It wouldn't be safe for you." When he "pressed upon them," they came in.

But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them [[Gen. 19:4-5](#)].

This is a sickening scene which reveals the degradation of this city -- the city of Sodom. The name that has been put on this sin from that day to this is sodomy. Apparently there was no attempt made in the city of Sodom to have a church for this crowd and to tell them that they were all right in spite of the fact that they practiced this thing. May I say to you that the Word of God is specific on this, and you cannot tone it down. Sodomy is an awful sin.

When this man Lot had gone down into the city of Sodom, he did not realize what kind of city it was -- I'm sure of that. He got down there and found out that perversion was the order of the day, and he brought up his children, his sons and daughters, in that atmosphere. When he earlier had pitched his tent toward Sodom, he had looked down there and had seen the lovely streets and boulevards and parks and public buildings. And he had seen the folk as they were on the outside, but he had not seen what they really were. The sin of this city is so great that God is now going to judge it. God is going to destroy the city.

Let's draw a sharp line here. There is a new attitude toward sin today. There is a gray area where sin is not really as black as we once thought it was. The church has compromised until it is pitiful. In Southern California we have a church made up of those who are homosexuals, and, lo and behold, they all admit that the pastor of the church is one also! May I say to you, the lesson of Sodom and Gomorrah is a lesson for this generation. God is not accepting this kind of church.

The idea today seems to be that you can become a child of God and continue on in sin. God says that is impossible -- you cannot do that, and this city of Sodom is an example of that fact. Paul asks the question: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" And the answer is "God forbid," or, Let it not be (see [Rom. 6:1-2](#)). The idea that you can be a Christian and go on in sin is a tremendous mistake, especially to make light of it, as I judge is being done in this particular case.

This is what they were doing in Sodom and Gomorrah -- and God destroyed these cities. Don't say that we have a primitive view of God in Genesis but that we have a better one today. Don't argue that, after all, Jesus received sinners. He sure did, but when He got through with them, He had changed them. The harlot who came to Him was no longer in that business. When she came to God, she changed. That is the thing that happened to other sinners. A publican came to Him, and he left the seat of customs. He gave up that

which was crooked when he came to the Lord. If you have come to Christ, you will be changed. Many people write and try to explain to me that we are living in a new day and I need to wake up. My friend, we are living in a new day, but it just happens to be Sodom and Gomorrah all over again.

And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly [[Gen. 19:6-7](#)].

The men of Sodom were outside the door, asking that these guests in the home of Lot be turned over to them. Lot said, "I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly." That is the way Lot looked at it, and he had been down there in Sodom a long time. It wasn't new morality to him; it was just old sin.

Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof [[Gen. 19:8](#)].

When a man entertained a guest in that day, he was responsible for him. Lot was willing to make this kind of sacrifice to protect his guests!

And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door [[Gen. 19:9](#)].

"And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: . . ." You see, Lot was advancing in the political arena there.

But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door [[Gen. 19:10-11](#)].

If Lot's guests had not done this, both they and Lot would have been destroyed, because that was the intention of the men of Sodom.

And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:

For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law [[Gen. 19:12-14](#)].

Lot is in a very bad situation. He had spent years down in the city of Sodom. He had learned to tolerate this sort of thing, although he calls it wickedness. He had seen his sons and daughters grow up, and they apparently had married among people with those ethical standards. When the time came that Lot got this word from the Lord to leave the city, he went to his sons-in-law and said, "Let's get out of here. God is going to destroy this city." They laughed at him. They ridiculed him. I suppose they knew that the week before Lot had invested a little money in real estate there. He had lived so long as one of them, without any real difference, that they took his warning as big joke. This man was out of the will of God in this place, and he had no witness for God. He did not win anybody for the Lord in this city. The same principle is true today: when you go down to their level, my friend, you do not win them. I think that that is being clearly demonstrated in this hour.

Frankly, I would agree with Abraham that this man Lot wasn't saved, but remember what Peter said: "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)" ([2Pet. 2:6-8](#)). I tell you, Lot never enjoyed it down there in Sodom. Now that he is going to leave the city, he cannot get anyone to leave with him except his wife and two single daughters.

And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city [[Gen. 19:15-16](#)].

Here is a man who was God's man in spite of everything. If I only had the Book of Genesis, I am not sure I would believe that Lot was saved, but since Peter calls him a righteous man, we know that he was. Lot had become righteous because he had followed Abraham -- he believed God, and he had offered the sacrifices. God extends mercy unto Lot, and he now believes God and gets out of the city.

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord:

Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die [[Gen. 19:17-19](#)].

Even Lot didn't want to leave. He would get out of the city, but he couldn't make it to the mountain.

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live [[Gen. 19:20](#)].

This city was a little place called Zoar, and that is where Lot went. You see, this man came out of Sodom, but he did not come clean even out of there. And, of course, he got into a great deal of trouble at that particular time.

Destruction Of The Cities Of The Plain (19:26-28)

God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we are told two things, one concerning his wife and the other concerning his daughters. Concerning his wife we read:

But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt [[Gen. 19:26](#)].

I think this verse has been greatly misunderstood. Why in the world did Mrs. Lot turn and look back? I think that the reason is twofold. First of all, she turned and looked back because she did not want to leave Sodom. She loved Sodom. She loved Lot, too, but it was a lot of Sodom that she loved. And she didn't want to leave it. She was probably a member of the country club, the sewing club, and the Shakespeare club. In fact, there wasn't a club in town that she was not a member of. She just loved these little get-togethers in the afternoon. I'm not sure but what they met and studied religion in a nice little religious club also. She was right in the thick of it all, my friend, and she didn't want to leave. Her heart was in Sodom. Her body walked out, but she surely left her heart there.

This is a tremendous lesson for us today. I hear a great many Christians talking about how they want to see the Lord come, but they are not living as if they mean it. On Sunday morning, it is difficult to get them to leave their lovely home. And on Sunday night, they are not going to leave their lovely home because they love television, too. They have a color television, and they are going to look at the programs on Sunday night because there are some good ones then. But when the Lord comes, my friend, you are going to leave the television; you are going to leave that lovely home; you are going to leave everything. I have just one question to ask you: Will it break your heart to leave all of this down here?

I have asked myself that question many times. To be honest with you, I am not anxious to leave. I would love to stay. I have my friends and loved ones whom I want to be with. And I have the radio ministry that I want to continue. I'll be frank with you, I hope the Lord will just let me stay here awhile longer. But I also want to be able to say that when He does call, I will not have a thing down here which will break my heart to leave -- not a thing. I love my home too, but I would just as soon go off and leave it. How do you feel about that today? Mrs. Lot turned and looked back, and this is one of the explanations.

The other reason that she looked back is simply that she did not believe God. God had said, "Leave the city, and don't look back." Lot didn't look back; he believed God. But Mrs. Lot did not believe God. She was not a believer, and so she didn't really make it out of the city. She was turned to a pillar of salt.

I am not going to go into the story of Lot's two daughters in [verses 31-38](#). It is as sordid as it can be. Frankly, Lot did not do well in moving down to the city of Sodom. He lost everything except his own soul. His life is a picture of a great many people who will not judge the sins of their lives. They are saved, "yet so as by fire." The Lord has said in a very definite way to these folk who have put all their eggs in a basket like this that if they will not judge their sin down here, He will judge it. Apparently, that was the case in Lot's story.

I want to conclude this chapter by looking at Abraham. What did Abraham think of all this?

And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD:

And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace [[Gen. 19:27-28](#)].

When Abraham looked down toward Sodom, I think his heart was sad. I am not sure whether or not he knew that Lot had escaped. He probably learned about it later on. When he looked down there, he probably was sad for Lot's sake, but Abraham had not invested a dime down there. When judgment came, it did not disturb him one whit because he wasn't in love with the things of Sodom and the things of the world.

Remember that we are told, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . ." ([1John 2:15](#)). I sometimes preach a sermon which I have entitled "Sightseeing in Sodom." First, I look at Sodom through the eyes of Lot himself: he sure had a wrong view of it. And then of Mrs. Lot: she fell in love with it. You can also sightsee in Sodom with Abraham: he lost nothing down there. Finally, you can go through Sodom with the Lord and see it as He sees it. It is too bad that the church today is not looking at the sin of sodomy as God looks at it. I do not think it is any more prevalent today than it has been in the past, but there is a tremendous percentage of our population who are homosexuals engaging in perversion. We speak of it in a more candid manner than we ever have, and it is something that is right in our midst.

What is to be the attitude of the Christian toward homosexuality? Even Lot in his day said, "You are doing wickedly." And God judged it. Isn't it enough for the child of God to know that he cannot compromise with this type of thing? This is a sin! The world indulges in it and then calls it a sickness. The same thing is said about the alcoholic. Sure, he's sick. Of course, he's sick. But what made him take that first drink and continue to drink until he became sick? Sin did it, my friend. Sin is the problem, and homosexuality is a sin. It is so labeled in the first chapter of Romans where God says He gave them up (see [Rom. 1:18-32](#)). [Genesis 19](#) is a very important chapter for this present generation in which we are living today.

Chapter 20

THEME: Abraham misrepresents Sarah

Chapter 20 seems about as necessary as a fifth leg on a cow. It is a chapter that you feel as if you would like to leave out, because in it Abraham repeats the same sin which he committed when he went down into the land of Egypt and lied concerning Sarah, saying, "She is my sister." It is the same sordid story, but this chapter is put here for a very important reason. Abraham and Sarah are going to have to deal with this sin before they can have Isaac, before they can have the blessing. May I say to you, until you and I are willing to deal with the sin in our lives, there is no blessing for us.

Abraham Misrepresents Sarah (20:1-13)

I am going to hit just the high points of chapter 20.

And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country,
and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and
Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah [[Gen. 20:1-2](#)].

This is quite interesting. Do you think that Sarah was beautiful? Well, at this time she is almost ninety years old, and she's beautiful. Not many senior citizens can qualify in this particular department.

Notice also that Abraham is getting quite far south in the land. He has gone beyond Kadesh-Barnea where the children of Israel later came up from Egypt and refused to enter the land. Abraham has gone down to Gerar, which I do not think he should have done, but be that as it may, he lies about Sarah again.

I want you notice Abraham's confession because this is the thing which makes this chapter important and reveals the fact that Abraham and Sarah cannot have Isaac until they deal with this sin that is in their lives -- and it goes way back.

And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not
in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake [[Gen. 20:11](#)].

Abraham is now talking to Abimelech who is greatly disturbed that Abraham would do a thing like lying about his wife. Again, Abraham was not trusting God. He felt that he was moving down into a godless place, but he finds out that Abimelech has a high sense of what is right and wrong. Abimelech puts a tremendous value upon character and apparently is a man who knows God. Poor Abraham doesn't look good by the side of Abimelech here.

And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father,
but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife
[[Gen. 20:12](#)].

Abraham lets it all out now. He says, "To tell the truth, it's half a lie. Sarah is my half sister, and she is my wife."

And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my
father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou
shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of
me, He is my brother [[Gen. 20:13](#)].

Abraham did not have complete confidence and trust in God, and so when they started out, he and Sarah made a pact that anywhere they went where it looked as if Abraham might be killed because of his wife, Sarah would say that Abraham was her brother. Abraham and Sarah thought that that would keep Abraham from being killed. They made that little agreement, and they had used it down in Egypt, and here they have used it again. This sin must be dealt with before God is going to hear and answer Abraham's prayer in sending a son. Isaac will not be born until this is dealt with.

How many Christians are there who will not judge sin in their lives, and as a result, there is no blessing in their lives? If those who are in places of leadership in our fundamental churches would confess their sins and deal with the sins that are in their lives, I frankly believe that we could have revival. I do not believe there will be any blessing until sin is dealt with. Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" ([1Cor. 11:28-32](#)). Blessing is being withheld from the church and from the lives of many believers because we will not deal with the sin in our lives. This is a tremendous spiritual lesson here in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Genesis.

Chapter 21

THEME: The birth of Isaac; Hagar and Ishmael cast out; Abraham and Abimelech at Beer-sheba

In the preceding chapter, we saw the sin that must be dealt with, confessed, and put away before Isaac could be born to Abraham and Sarah. Now in chapter 21 we have the birth of Isaac.

The Birth Of Isaac (21:1-8)

And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him [[Gen. 21:1-2](#)].

You will notice that there is a very striking similarity between the birth of Isaac and the birth of Christ. I believe that the birth of Isaac was given to us to set before mankind this great truth before Christ came. Isaac was born at the set time God had promised, and Paul says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" ([Gal. 4:4](#)).

And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.

And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age [[Gen. 21:3-7](#)].

There are some very remarkable truths here that we need to lay hold of. First of all, the birth of Isaac was a miraculous birth. It was contrary to nature. In the fourth chapter of Romans, Paul writes that Abraham ". . . considered not his own body now dead . . . neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb" ([Rom. 4:19](#)). Out of death God brings forth life: this is a miraculous birth. We need to call attention to the fact that God did not flash the supernatural birth of Christ on the world as being something new. He began to prepare men for it, and therefore way back here at the birth of Isaac we have a miraculous birth.

We also find here that God had to deal with both Sarah and Abraham. They had to recognize that they could do nothing, that it would be impossible for them to have a child. Abraham is 100 years old; Sarah is 90 years old. In other words, the birth of Isaac must be a birth that they really have nothing to do with.

And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned [[Gen. 21:8](#)].

This little fellow first lived by feeding on his mother's milk, but there came a day when he had to be weaned. Even this has a lesson for us. When mamma is getting the bottle ready for the little baby in the crib, everything in his entire body is working. He's got his feet up in the air, he's got his hands up in the air, and he's yelling at the top of his voice -- he wants his bottle! "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" ([1Peter 2:2](#)). It is wonderful to be a new Christian with an appetite like that for the milk of the Word. But the day comes when you are ready to start growing up as a believer. Instead of just reading [Psalm 23](#) and [John 14](#) -- wonderful as they are -- try reading through the entire Bible. Grow up. Don't be a babe all of the time. Notice God's admonishment in [Hebrews 5:13-14](#). "For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age . . ." Grow up, friend.

Hagar And Ishmael Cast Out (21:9-21)

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto, mocking.

Wherefore she said unto , Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac [[Gen. 21:9-10](#)].

The coming of this little boy Isaac into the home sure did produce a great deal of difficulty. We find that the boy who was the son of Hagar, Ishmael, was mocking. We

begin now to see the nature and the character of Ishmael. Up to this point, he seems to be a pretty nice boy, but now, with the appearance of this other son in the family, Ishmael really shows his true colors.

This is an illustration, by the way, of the fact that a believer has two natures. Until you are converted, you have an old nature, and that old nature controls you. You do what you want to do. As the old secular song put it, you are "doing what comes naturally." What you do that comes naturally is not always the nicest sort of thing. But when you are born again, you receive a new nature. And when you receive a new nature, that is where the trouble always begins. Paul writes in the seventh chapter of Romans of the battle going on between the old nature and the new nature: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil; which I would not, that I do" ([Rom. 7:19](#)). That is, the new nature doesn't want to, but the old nature wants to do it, and the old nature is in control. The time comes when you have to make a decision as to which nature you are going to live by. You must make a determination in this matter of yielding to the Lord. You either have to permit the Holy Spirit to move in your life, or else you have to go through life controlled by the flesh. There is no third alternative for the child of God. The son of the bondwoman must be put out. That is exactly what we have here in Genesis: the son of the bondwoman Hagar had to be put out.

And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son [[Gen. 21:11](#)].

After all, as far as the flesh is concerned, Ishmael is Abraham's son just as much as Isaac is. Isaac has just been born, and a little bitty baby doesn't know too much about him yet. But this boy Ishmael has been in the home for a good many years -- he's a teen-ager now, and Abraham is attached to him. The thing is very grievous if Abraham is going to have to send him away. Again, I go back to that which we said before: God did not approve of the thing which Sarah and Abraham did, and God cannot accept Ishmael. This is sin. God just did not approve of it, and He doesn't intend to approve of it at all. It was a heartbreak to Abraham, but in order to relieve the embarrassment, he had to send that boy away. Poor Sarah just couldn't take it with this older boy around mocking her.

As a believer you cannot live in harmony with both natures. You are going to have to make a decision. James says, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" ([James 1:8](#)). This explains the instability and the insecurity among many Christians today. They want to go with the world, and yet they want to go with the Lord. They are spiritual schizophrenics, trying to do both -- and you cannot do that. The Greeks had a race in which they put two horses together, and the rider would put one foot on one horse and the other foot on the other horse, and the race would start. Well, it was a great race as long as the horses were together. You and I have two natures -- one is a black horse, and the other is a white horse. It would be great if they would go together, but they just will not work together. The white horse goes one way and the black horse another way. When they do this, you and I have to make up our minds which one we are going with -- whether we are going to live by the old nature or the new nature. This is why we are told to yield ourselves: "yield yourselves unto God . . . and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" ([Rom. 6:13](#)). Paul goes on to say that what the law could not do through the weakness of the flesh, the Spirit of God can now accomplish (see [Rom. 8:3-](#)

[4](#)). The law tried to control man's old nature and failed. Now the Spirit of God, empowering the new nature, can accomplish what the law could never do.

The character of Ishmael, the son of Hagar, begins to be revealed. This is the nature that we find manifested later on in that nation, a nation that is antagonistic and whose hand is against his brother. This has been the picture of him down through the centuries.

In the birth of Isaac, as I have already suggested, we have a foreshadowing of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. God did not suddenly spring the virgin birth on mankind. He had prepared us by several miraculous births before this, including the birth of John the Baptist, the birth even of Samson, and here the birth of Isaac. I would like to call your attention to the remarkable comparison between the births of Isaac and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) The birth of Isaac and the birth of Christ had both been promised. When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees twenty-five years earlier, God had said to him, "I am going to give a son to you and Sarah." Now twenty-five years have gone by, and God has made good His promise. God also said to the nation Israel, "A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son." When the day came that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, it was a fulfillment of prophecy. Both births had been promised.

(2) With both births there was a long interval between the promise and the fulfillment. Actually, there were about twenty-five years from the time God promised it until the birth of Isaac. With the birth of Christ, you could go back many generations. For example, God had promised that there would come One in David's line -- and that was a thousand years before Christ was born. This is quite a remarkable parallel here.

(3) The announcements of the births seemed incredulous and impossible to Sarah and to Mary. You will recall that the servants of the Lord visited Abraham as they were on the way to Sodom, and they announced the birth of Isaac. It just seemed impossible. Sarah laughed and said, "This thing just can't be. It is beyond belief." And, after all, who was the first one to raise a question about the virgin birth? It was Mary herself. When the angel made the announcement, she said, ". . . How shall this be, seeing I now not a man?" ([Luke 1:34](#)).

(4) Both Isaac and Jesus were named before their births. Abraham and Sarah were told that they were going to have a son and that they were going to name him Isaac. And with the birth of the Lord Jesus, we find that He was also named beforehand. The angel said to Joseph, ". . . thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" ([Matt. 1:21](#)).

(5) Both births occurred at God's appointed time. [Verse 2](#) of this chapter says that at the set time which God had spoken to them of, Sarah brought forth Isaac. And regarding the birth of Jesus, we note that Paul says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" ([Gal. 4:4](#)).

(6) Both births were miraculous. The birth of Isaac was a miraculous birth, and, certainly, the birth of the Lord Jesus was -- no man had any part in that.

(7) Both sons were a particular joy of their fathers. We read that "Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac," meaning laughter. This was the name he gave his son because back at the time when God made the announcement, he laughed because of his sheer joy in it all. Referring to the Lord Jesus, we read that the Father spoke out of heaven and said, ". . . This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" ([Matt. 3:17](#)). Both sons were a joy.

(8) Both sons were obedient to their fathers, even unto death. In chapter 22 we are going to see that this boy Isaac was offered up by his father. He was not a small boy of eight or nine years. Isaac just happened to be about thirty-three years old when this took place, and he was obedient to his father even unto death. That was true of Isaac, and that was certainly true of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a marvelous picture of the birth and life of Christ in the birth and life of Isaac.

(9) Finally, the miraculous birth of Isaac is a picture of the resurrection of Christ. We have already noted Paul's words that Abraham "considered not his own body now dead . . . neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb" ([Rom. 4:19](#)). Out of death came life -- that's resurrection, you see. After Paul emphasizes this, he goes on to say of the Lord Jesus, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" ([Rom. 4:25](#)). We have in Isaac quite a remarkable picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we find how God graciously deals with Abraham and also with Hagar and her son Ishmael.

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called [[Gen. 21:12](#)].

God makes it clear to Abraham that He is not going to accept Ishmael as the son He had promised.

And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed [[Gen. 21:13](#)].

God had said, "Of thy seed, I will make nations to come from you," and therefore He now says that a great nation will come from this boy Ishmael also.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt [[Gen. 21:14-21](#)].

The Scriptures are going to drop the line of Ishmael and follow it no longer, but his descendants, the Arabs, are out there in the desert even today.

Abraham And Abimelech At Beer-sheba (21:22-34)

And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest:

Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned [[Gen. 21:22-23](#)].

In other words, Abimelech wants to make a contract or a treaty with this man Abraham -- and they become good friends because of this.

Thus they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines.

And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God [[Gen. 21:32-33](#)].

Abraham is calling upon God's name everywhere he goes.

And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days [[Gen. 21:34](#)].

We are told later that Abraham was always a stranger and a pilgrim in this land that God had promised to him, and this is an evidence of it.

Chapter 22

THEME: God commands Abraham to offer Isaac; God restrains Abraham; God reaffirms His promises; Abraham returns to Beer-sheba

In this chapter we come to another great high point of the Bible. We are walking on mountain peaks in the Book of Genesis. Chapter 22 is the account of Abraham's offering of his own son. God commanded him to offer Isaac on the altar and then restrained him at the last minute when He saw that Abraham was willing to go through with it. This chapter brings us to the seventh and last appearance of God to Abraham. After this, there is nothing more that God could ask Abraham to do. This is the supreme test that He brought to this man.

If you were to designate the ten greatest chapters of the Bible, you would almost have to include [Genesis 22](#). One of the reasons for that is that this is the first time human sacrifice is even suggested. It is in the plan and purpose of God to make it clear to man that human sacrifice is wrong. This incident reveals that. It also reveals that God requires a life to be given up in order that He might save sinners. There is no one among the children of men worthy to take that place. God's Son was the only One. It is interesting that Paul said, "God spared not His own Son," but you might add that He did spare the son of Abraham and did not let him go through with the sacrifice of Isaac.

This chapter compares with [Psalm 22](#) and [Isaiah 53](#). The first time that I saw in this chapter these great truths which depict the cross of Christ, it was breathtaking. Not only in the birth of Isaac, but now also in the sacrifice of Isaac, there is a strange similarity to the life of our Lord.

The very interesting thing is that James makes a statement concerning this incident which may seem contradictory to other parts of the Bible: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" ([James 2:21](#)). For Paul makes this statement in [Romans 4](#); "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" ([Rom. 4:1-3](#)). Who is right? James or Paul? My answer is that both of them are right. First of all, we need to note that both of them are talking about the same thing -- faith. James is talking about the works of faith, not the works of law. Paul is talking about justification before God, quoting the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, way back when Abraham was just getting under way in a walk of faith. At that time only God knew his heart, and God saw that Abraham believed Him: "And he (Abraham) believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" ([Gen. 15:6](#)). We can see that Abraham failed many times, and I am of the opinion that his neighbors might have said, "We don't see that he is righteous." But when the day came that he took his son to be offered on the altar, even the hardhearted Philistine had to admit that Abraham demonstrated his faith by his actions. James says that Abraham was justified by works. When was he justified? When he offered Isaac. But the question is going to arise: Did Abraham really offer Isaac upon the altar? Of course, the answer is that he didn't -- but he was willing to. That very act of being willing is the act that James is talking about which reveals that Abraham had the works of faith. James is emphasizing the works of faith seen in this twenty-second chapter of Genesis, and Paul is talking about faith in his heart which Abraham had way back in the fifteenth chapter.

God Commands Abraham To Offer Isaac (22:1-10)

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am [[Gen. 22:1](#)].

The word tempt is a little bit too strong; actually, the word means "test." James makes it very clear in his epistle that God never tempts anyone with evil. God tempts folks in the sense that He tests their faith. God did test Abraham, and He asked him to do something very strange.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of [[Gen. 22:2](#)].

Right after this chapter, we are told that Sarah was 127 years old when she died (see [Gen. 23:1](#)). When you put that down with this chapter, you find that this boy Isaac was not just a little lad. Sarah was 90 years old when Isaac was born and 127 when she died. That means that 37 years elapsed here. Since he is called a "lad" in this chapter, you would not gather that he actually was in his thirties -- probably around 30 or 33 years of age.

"Take now thy son [notice how this plays upon the heartstrings of Abraham and of God Himself], thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." "Take now thy son" -- the Lord Jesus has taken the position of the Son in the Trinity. "Thy son, thine only son" -- the Lord Jesus is said to be the only begotten Son. "Thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest" -- the Lord Jesus said, "The Father loves Me."

"And get thee into the land of Moriah." It is the belief of a great many that Moriah -- that is, this particular part -- is the place where the temple was built centuries later and also the place that the Lord Jesus was sacrificed -- right outside the city walls. When I was in Jerusalem, I had the feeling that Golgotha and the temple area were not very far apart. They belong to the same ridge. A street has been cut through there, and the ridge has been breeched, but it is the same ridge, and it is called Moriah. Let's not say that the Lord Jesus died in the exact spot -- we don't know -- but certainly He died on the same ridge, the same mountain, on which Abraham offered Isaac.

"And offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." The burnt offering was the offering up until the time of Mosaic law; then a sin offering and a trespass offering were given. Here the burnt offering speaks of the person of Christ, who He is. This is an offer of a human sacrifice, and, frankly, it raises this moral question: Isn't human sacrifice wrong? Yes, it is morally wrong. Had you met Abraham on that day when he was on his way with Isaac, you might have asked him, "Where are you going, Abraham?" He would have replied, "To offer Isaac as a sacrifice." And you would have then asked, "Don't you know that that is wrong?" Abraham would have said, "Yes, I've been taught that it was wrong. I know that the heathen nations around here offer human sacrifice -- the Philistines offer to Molech -- but I have been taught otherwise." You would then question him further, "Then why are you doing it?" and he would explain, "All I know is that God has commanded it. I don't understand it. But I've been walking with Him now for over fifty years. He has never failed me, nor has He asked me to do anything that did not prove to be the best thing. I don't understand

this, but I believe that if I go all the way with Him that God will raise Isaac from the dead. I believe that He will do that."

This is a tremendous picture as Abraham takes Isaac with him:

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him [[Gen. 22:3](#)].

Abraham takes Isaac with him, and he takes the wood for the burnt offering.

Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off [[Gen. 22:4](#)].

It took Abraham three days to get there, but remember that it was on the third day that Abraham received Isaac alive, back from the dead, as it were. That is the way that Abraham looked at it: Isaac was raised up to him the third day. What a picture we have here.

And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you [[Gen. 22:5](#)].

The transaction that is going to take place is between the father and the son, between Abraham and Isaac. And actually, God shut man out at the cross. At the time of the darkness at high noon, man was shut out. The night had come when no man could work, and during those last three hours, that cross became an altar on which the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world was offered. The transaction was between the Father and the Son on that cross. Man was outside and was not participating at all. The picture is the same here: it is Abraham and Isaac alone.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together [[Gen. 22:6](#)].

"Abraham took the wood . . . and laid it upon Isaac his son." Remember that Christ carried His own cross. The fire here speaks of judgment, and the knife speaks of the execution of judgment and of sacrifice.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here I am, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together [[Gen. 22:7-8](#)].

[Verse 13](#) tells us that shortly after this there was a ram that was caught in the thicket by his horns, and Abraham got that ram and offered it. Abraham says here that God will provide Himself a lamb. But there was no lamb there; it was a ram, and there is a distinction. The Lamb was not provided until centuries later when John the Baptist marked Him out and identified Him, saying, ". . . Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh

away the sin of the world" ([John 1:29](#)). "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" -- it is very important to see that Abraham was speaking prophetically.

Abraham is now ready to offer this boy on the altar although he does not quite understand.

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood [[Gen. 22:9](#)].

Isaac is not just a little boy whom Abraham had to tie up. He is a grown man, and I believe that Isaac could have overcome Abraham if it had come to a physical encounter. But Isaac is doing this in obedience. The Lord Jesus went to the cross having said, "Not My will, but Thine be done." He went to the cross to fulfill the will of God. What a picture we have here!

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son [[Gen. 22:10](#)].

At this point you and I might have said, "Abraham, are you going through with it? It looks now like God is going to permit you to." He would have said, "I sure am. I've been taught that it is wrong, and I don't understand, but I've also learned to obey God."

This is a real crisis in Abraham's life. God has brought this man through four very definite crises, each of which was a real exercise of his soul, a real strain upon his heart. First of all, he was called to leave all of his relatives in Ur of the Chaldees. He was just to leave the whole group. That was a real test for Abraham. He didn't do it very well at the beginning, but, nevertheless, the break finally came. Then there was the test that came with Lot, his nephew. Abraham loved Lot -- he wouldn't have been carrying Lot around with him if he hadn't. But the time came when they had to separate, and Lot went down to Sodom. Then there was the test with this boy of his, the son of Hagar, Ishmael. Abraham just cried out to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee!" He loved that boy; he hated to be separated from him. Now Abraham comes to this supreme test, the fourth great crisis in his life: he is asked to give up Isaac. Abraham does not quite understand all the details for the very simple reason that God has told him, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead (see [Heb. 11:19](#)), but as far as Abraham is concerned, he is willing to go through with the sacrifice.

God Restrains Abraham (22:11-14)

James wrote that Abraham was justified by works when he offered up his son. But wait just a minute. Did Abraham offer his son? Does your Bible say that Abraham plunged the knife into his son? No, and mine doesn't read that way either.

And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me [[Gen. 22:11-12](#)].

Now God knows that Abraham fears Him. How does He know? By his actions, by his works; previously it was by his faith. God sees your heart -- He knows whether you are genuine or not -- but your neighbors and your friends do not know. They can only know by your works. That is the reason James could say that "faith without works is dead." Faith has to produce something.

God tested Abraham. I believe that any person whom God calls, any person whom God saves, any person whom God uses is going to be tested. God tested Abraham, and God tests those who are His own today. He tests you and me, and the tests are given to us to strengthen our faith, to establish us, and to make us serviceable for Him. This man Abraham is now given the supreme test, and God will not have to ask anything of him after this.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son [[Gen. 22:13](#)].

All the way from the Garden of Eden down to the cross of Christ, the substitution was this little animal that pointed to His coming -- and God would not permit human sacrifice. But when His Son came into the world, His Son went to the cross and died: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" ([Rom. 8:32](#)). That cross became an altar on which the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world was offered. It is very important to see that.

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen [[Gen. 22:14](#)].

Abraham now names this place which a great many people believe is where Solomon's temple was built. Golgotha, the place of a skull, is right there on that same ridge where the temple stood. There Abraham offered his son, and it was there that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. This is a glorious, wonderful thing to see. Abraham calls the name of this place Jehovah-jireh, meaning Jehovah will provide. Here is where God intervened in his behalf.

God Reaffirms His Promises (22:15-18)

And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son [[Gen. 22:15-16](#)].

I have a question to ask: Did Abraham do it? No, he did not offer his son, but God says to him, "Because you have done this thing. . . ." You see, Abraham believed God, and he went far enough to let you and me know -- God already knew -- and to let the created universe know that he was willing to give his son. And so God counted it to him that he had done it. Abraham is justified by faith, but he is also justified before men by his works. He demonstrated that he had that faith.

"And hast not withheld thy son, thine only son." Notice how God plays upon that -- because He gave His only Son.

Through this incident, God is making it clear that there will have to be a Man to stand in the gap, there will have to be a Man capable of becoming the Savior of the race if anyone is to be saved. That is a great lesson given to us in this chapter. Abraham said that God would provide Himself a Lamb, and they found a ram and offered it. But God did provide a Lamb nineteen hundred years later in Christ. God stayed Abraham's hand and did not let him go through with the sacrifice of Isaac because it would have been wrong. God spared Abraham's son, but God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up freely for us all.

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply
thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon
the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;
because thou hast obeyed my voice [[Gen. 22:17-18](#)].

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." What "seed" is God talking about here? If you go to [Galatians 3:16](#), you will find that Paul interprets what the "seed" means: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Thus we have the Bible's own interpretation of the "seed."

Going back to the eighth verse, we find that Paul says this: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" ([Gal. 3:8](#)). When did God preach the gospel to Abraham? God preached the gospel to him when He called upon him to offer his son Isaac upon the altar. God says here, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and that seed is Christ. This is the gospel as it was given to Abraham, if you please.

I would like to make a comment here concerning something that is customarily overlooked. We assume that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the Old Testament worthies were great men but that they were not as smart as we are, that they did not know as much as we know. However, I am of the opinion that Abraham knew a great deal more about the coming of Christ and the gospel than you and I give him credit for. In fact, the Lord Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" ([John 8:56](#)). So he must have known a great deal more than we realize. God had revealed much to Abraham, but the Savior was not yet come. We know today that He would not come for nineteen hundred years, but there on the top of Mount Moriah where Abraham offered Isaac was a picture of the offering and even of the resurrection of Christ! After God called Abraham to offer Isaac, it was three days before he even got to Moriah. God gave Isaac back to Abraham alive on the third day; so that this is a picture of both the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul says that God preached the gospel to Abraham, and certainly it was done here.

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Today the gospel of Christ has gone out pretty much to all the world. There are many who have not heard -- that is true even in our own midst -- but nevertheless, the blessing has come to all nations. And the only blessing the nations have is through Christ.

"Because thou hast obeyed my voice." That obedience rested upon Abraham's faith, and faith always will lead to action. "Faith without works is dead."

Abraham Returns To Beer-sheba (22:19-20)

So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor [[Gen. 22:19-20](#)].

The remainder of this chapter gives us a little sidelight on the family of Abraham. Abraham had left his brother Nahor way back yonder in the land of Haran. His line will not be followed in the Scriptures, but it will cross the line of Abraham a little later on. We will go into that when we come to it. If you read the rest of this chapter, you will have quite an exercise in the pronunciation of names.

Chapter 23

THEME: Death and burial of Sarah

In chapter 23 we see the death of Sarah and Abraham's purchase of a cave in which to bury her, the cave of Machpelah.

And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.

And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her [[Gen. 23:1-2](#)].

Notice that Sarah's age is given as 127 years old. She was 90 when Isaac was born, which means that at the time of her death (which took place after the offering of Isaac by several years, I suppose), Isaac was 37 years old.

We are told that Sarah died in Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron. Abraham even had to buy a cave in which to bury his dead in the very land that God had given to him. Why didn't he take Sarah somewhere else to bury her? It is because the hope they have of the future is in that land. As we move on down in this chapter, we will see that although there are the arrangements for a funeral, which is not very exciting or interesting and is perhaps even a little morbid to some, it is very important to see a great truth here.

And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight [[Gen. 23:3-4](#)].

Abraham calls himself a stranger and a sojourner even in the Promised Land which God had promised to give to him.

And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead [[Gen. 23:5-6](#)].

This is a very generous offer made by the children of Heth who live in this land. They probably said to Abraham, "Just pick your burying spot in any of our sepulchres -- that's it. We'd be delighted to have you." Abraham had made a tremendous impression. They call him "a mighty prince." This man's influence counted for something.

And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

And he communed with them, saying, if it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,

That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you [[Gen. 23:7-9](#)].

The cave of Machpelah was the place Abraham chose, but he wanted to buy it; he wanted nothing given to him. In other words, until God gives him that land, he will buy what he needs and wants. So now he actually buys a burying place.

Again I ask the question: Why didn't Abraham take Sarah somewhere else to bury her? He buried her here because it is the Promised Land, and the hope of the future is here. As you go through the Bible, you will find that there are two great hopes and two great purposes which God has. He has an earthly purpose, and He has a heavenly purpose. He has an earthly purpose; that is, this earth on which you and I live is going into eternity. It is going to be traded in on a new model. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. But there will be an earth, and it will be inhabited throughout eternity. This is the promise that God gave to Abraham and to those after him. God is not going to put this earth on which you and I live in the garbage can after He gets through with the program which He is carrying out today; nor is it going to be disposed of in a wrecking yard for old and battered cars. God is not going to get rid of it. He intends to trade it in on a new model. The new earth will go into eternity, and there will be people to inhabit it. This was the hope of Abraham. Abraham wanted to be buried in that land so that, when the resurrection came, he and Sarah would be raised in that land. He never knew how many were coming after him, but there are going to be literally millions raised from the dead. This is their hope. It is an earthly hope, and it will be realized.

In the Upper Room, our Lord said this to His disciples who were schooled in the Old Testament and who had the Old Testament hope: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" ([John 14:1-3](#)). He is speaking of the New Jerusalem which He is preparing today and which is the place to which the church will go. The New Jerusalem will be the eternal abode of the church. This teaching was brand-new to the disciples, and I am afraid that it is brand-new to a great many Christians. God never told Abraham that He would take him away from this earth to heaven. Rather, He kept telling him, "I am going to give you this land." Abraham believed God, and that was the reason that he wanted Sarah buried in that land. It became the place for him to bury his dead. He intended to be buried there, and he is buried there.

The exact location of Abraham's burying place is at Hebron, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. When we made a trip there, we visited the Moslem mosque which is built over that spot. Frankly, on our entire trip through that land, I never felt uncomfortable or even a little afraid, except at Hebron. We had been warned to be very careful in Hebron, that there was a great deal of antagonism toward tourists and, actually, toward everyone who did not belong there. Of course, they allowed us to visit the mosque because it meant tourist dollars. After we went in, we looked through a little hole in the floor and down into the cave where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah are all supposed to be buried. (Rachel is buried at Bethlehem.) These folk are all buried in Israel because of their hope of being raised from the dead in that land. It is an earthly hope. Our hope as New Testament believers is a heavenly hope. I trust that that is clear to you so that you can understand why this burial was so important to Abraham at this particular time.

Abraham now makes a deal to buy the cave. Notice the transaction:

And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,

Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.

And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land [[Gen. 23:10-12](#)].

Notice Abraham and the generosity of these people and of this man Ephron in particular. They certainly were polite in that day. We have the impression that these were cavemen who carried clubs around ready to club each other. If Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the other Old Testament saints -- even the men who are mentioned in this chapter -- were in Los Angeles today and could go back and report to their folk, I think they would say, "Do you know that our offspring are a bunch of cavemen? They're highly uncivilized! They are rude and crude and a disgrace." I think they would say that of us, but we have the advantage that we can talk about them. It is interesting to note how polite they are. "And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land."

And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.

And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,

My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.

And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant [[Gen. 23:13-16](#)].

That is, Abraham paid for the field and cave in the legal tender of that day.

And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure

Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.

And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth [[Gen. 23:17-20](#)].

Apparently, this place is where the mosque is built at Hebron today. It is considered either the second or third most important mosque in the world of Islam. They have many mosques in Cairo and other places, and the ones I have seen are absolutely beautiful. The most important one, of course, would be at Mecca. I am not sure whether the one at Hebron or the one at Jerusalem would be number two, but the other would then be number three. You can see how important this is, because the Arabs all trace their lineage back to Abraham.

Chapter 24

THEME: A bride for Isaac

We have come in chapter 24 to a major break in this second division of Genesis. The first division (chapters 1 -- 11) deals with four great events. The second and final division, (chapters 12 -- 50, deals with four outstanding individuals. Specifically, in [Genesis 12](#) -- [Genesis 23](#) we have Abraham, the man of faith. Now in chapters 24 -- 26 we have Isaac, the beloved son. There are three great events in the life of Isaac, and we have already seen two of them. The first was his birth, and the second was his being offered by

Abraham. The third is the obtaining of his bride. They say there are three great events in a man's life -- his birth, his marriage, and his death -- and that he has no choice except with the second one, marriage. Sometimes a man doesn't seem to have much choice in that connection either, but, nevertheless, these are the three great events in a man's life.

We come now to the story of how Isaac secured his bride. Abraham sends his trusted servant back to the land of Haran in Mesopotamia to get a bride for Isaac -- and we will see the success of the servant in securing Rebekah. This is a very wonderful love story. It reveals that God is interested in the man whom you marry, young lady, and He is interested in the young lady whom you marry, young man.

There are two institutions that God has given to the human family: one is marriage, and the other is human government (God permits man to rule himself today). These are two universal and very important institutions. When these are broken, a society will fall apart. The home is the backbone of any society -- God knew that -- and He established marriage, intending that it give strength and stability to society. The same thing is true relative to human government -- a government must have the power to take human life in order to protect human life -- that is the purpose of it. Because human life is sacred, God gave such laws.

The point here is that God is interested in your love story, and it is wonderful when you bring God into it. The first miracle that our Lord performed was at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. I do not know how many weddings He went to, but He went to that one.

The twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis is one of the richest sections of the Word of God because it tells a love story that goes way back to the very beginning. A very dramatic account is given here of the way that a bride was secured for Isaac, and again, a fantastic spiritual picture is also presented to us. There are two things that I want you to notice as we go through this chapter. One is the leading of the Lord in all the details of the lives of those involved. It is a remarkable statement that is made, time and time again, of how God led. Even in this early day, there were those in that social climate who were looking to God and following His leading. Some would have us believe that this took place in the Stone Age, when man was a caveman and pretty much uncivilized. Don't believe a word of it! Here is a record that shows that man did not start out as that kind of man at all -- and we find here the leading of God. If God could lead in the lives of these folk, He can lead in your life and my life. The second thing to notice in this chapter is the straightforward manner in which Rebekah made her decision to go with the servant and become the bride of Isaac. This is a tremendous thing which we will notice as we go through.

And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things [[Gen. 24:1](#)].

Abraham is old, well stricken in age, and the Lord has blessed him in all things. Abraham now wants to get a bride for his son Isaac, but he does not want to get a bride among the Canaanites where the people are given to idolatry and paganism, and so he will send his servant to his people, back in the land of Haran, to get a bride for Isaac.

And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh [[Gen. 24:2](#)].

This is the way men took an oath in that day. They did not raise their right hands and put their left hands on a Bible. They didn't have a Bible to begin with, and frankly, I do not think it is necessary for anyone to put his hand on a Bible to swear that he is telling the truth. If he intends to lie, he will lie even if his hand is resting on a Bible. The method in that day was for a man to put his hand under the thigh of the man to whom he was going to make an oath. I think this servant was Eliezer. He was the head servant in the home of Abraham, and he had a son -- remember that Abraham had called God's attention to that earlier (see [Gen. 15:2-3](#)).

And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell [[Gen. 24:3](#)].

My Christian friend, if you have a boy or girl in your home who is marriageable, you ought to pray that he will not marry one of the "Canaanites." They are still in the land, and there is always a danger of our young people marrying one of them. If they do, as someone has put it, they are going to have the devil for their father-in-law, and they are always going to have trouble with him.

But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again [[Gen. 24:4-6](#)].

In other words the servant says to Abraham, "Suppose I cannot find a girl who will come with me. Shall I come back and get Isaac to take him to that land?" And Abraham says, "Never take Isaac back! This is the place where God wants us. Do not return him to that land under any circumstances." This is very important for us to see.

The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that swore unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence [[Gen. 24:7](#)].

Abraham is really a man of faith. He demonstrates it again and again, and here he is magnificent. He says to this servant, "You can count on God to lead you. God has promised me this." Abraham is not taking a leap in the dark -- faith is not a leap in the dark. It must rest upon the Word of God. Many people say, "I believe God, and it will come to pass." That's fine. It is wonderful for you to believe God, but do you have something in writing from Him? Abraham always asked for it in writing, and he had it in writing from God. God had made a contract with him. Abraham is really saying, "God

has promised me that through my seed Isaac He is going to bring a blessing to the world. You can be sure of one thing: God has a bride back there for Isaac." You see, Abraham rests upon what God has said. We need to not be foolish today. Faith is not foolishness. It is resting upon something. It is always reasonable. It is never a leap in the dark. It is not betting your life that this or that will come to pass. It is not a gamble; it is a sure thing. Faith is the real sure thing. Abraham is sure.

And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again [[Gen. 24:8](#)].

Abraham says, "Don't ever take my son back there, but if the woman won't come, then you are discharged." What does that mean? I think it means simply that Abraham would have told you, "God has another way of working this out. I don't know what it will be, but I am very sure that God does not want my son to marry a godless girl."

My friend, that is what faith is. Faith is acting upon the Word of God. Faith rests upon something. God wants us to believe His Word and not just believe. It is pious nonsense to think that you can force God to do something, that God has to do it because you believe it. I have made it through a number of years now with cancer in my body, and no one wants to be healed more than I do. Don't tell me that I don't believe in faith healing -- I do. However, I have been told that I can force God, that God will heal me if I demand it. I do not know what His will is, but whatever His will is, that is what I want done. God wants us to bring our needs to Him, but He has to be the One to determine how He will answer our prayers. Abraham has something to rest upon. He is not demanding anything of God. He says, "If this doesn't work out, then God has another way to work it out."

And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning that matter [[Gen. 24:9](#)].

Now watch the servant as he goes out to get a bride for Isaac.

And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor [[Gen. 24:10](#)].

The servant who is going to Mesopotamia to get a bride for Isaac takes ten camels along, and that means somebody had to ride them. He took along quite a retinue of servants.

"For all the goods of his master were in his hand." In other words, he had charge of all the chattels and all the possessions of Abraham.

And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water [[Gen. 24:11](#)].

It may seem strange to you that the women came out to draw water, but they were the ones who did the watering of the camels in that day. Very frankly, women did lots more work in those days than they do today -- I mean by that, hard physical labor. The women were the ones who watered and took care of the stock. The men were supposed to be out trading and doing other work -- they were not always loafing, by any means. But it is

interesting to note that it was the custom of that day for women to go out to draw water. This servant was waiting because it was not the proper thing for him, as a stranger, to water his camels before the others who lived in that community.

This servant is depending upon God. Abraham had put all of this in the hands of the Lord, and now the servant does also:

And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master [[Gen. 24:12-14](#)].

The servant's prayer is something like this: "The daughters of the men of the city will be coming out. I do not know which one to choose, and it is just left up to me to pick one of them. I pray that the one that I pick might be the one that You pick." In other words, he calls upon the Lord to lead him in making the right choice.

Who do you think he is going to pick? Well, he is a man, and he is going to pick the best looking woman who comes out. And you can be sure of one thing -- Rebekah was a good looking woman. The Puritans had the idea that beauty was of the devil. The devil is beautiful -- he's an angel of light, by the way -- but he does not have it all. After all, God is the Creator, and you have never seen a sunset or looked at a beautiful flower that He did not make. He makes women beautiful, and there is nothing wrong with that. I am sure this man is going to pick the best looking one who comes out -- he'd be a pretty poor servant if he didn't.

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up [[Gen. 24:15-16](#)].

I told you Rebekah was good looking -- I knew it was coming, of course. She was good looking -- the Word of God says it, my friend, and there is nothing wrong with that. I resent it today that Hollywood, the theater, and the devil get beauty. I think that the Lord ought to have some of it. He made it to begin with, and there is nothing wrong with His using a lovely and beautiful person. I pray always that God will call fine looking men and women into His service today.

"And the damsel was very fair to look upon." She was not just an ordinary girl. She would have won a beauty contest. She was "a virgin, neither had any man known her."

And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking [[Gen. 24:17-19](#)].

The important thing to note is that Rebekah is a very polite and courteous girl also. She is beautiful, not dumb, and very polite.

And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels [[Gen. 24:20](#)].

Remember that there were ten camels, and I do not know how long it had been since they had last filled their tanks. It was just like filling the radiator of a car to fill up those camels.

And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not [[Gen. 24:21](#)].

The servant just stands there in amazement. He is wondering whether this is it, whether God is leading or not -- he believes He is.

And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;

And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?

And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor [[Gen. 24:22-24](#)].

Nahor is a brother of Abraham.

She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD [[Gen. 24:25-26](#)].

The servant sees the hand of God in this. It is wonderful to have God leading and guiding, is it not?

And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren [[Gen. 24:27](#)].

This is a great statement here: "I being in the way, the LORD led me. . . ." The Lord leads those who are in the way -- that is, those who are in His way, who are wanting to be led, who will be led of Him, and who will do what He wants done. God can lead a willing heart anytime.

And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things.

And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well [[Gen. 24:28-29](#)].

Right here, let me warn you to keep your eye on Uncle Laban. He will bear watching at this point and from here on. He was greatly impressed by material things. Notice what happens:

And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well [[Gen. 24:30](#)].

The servant just waited out there at the well to see whether anyone would come out to lead him into the home of Rebekah, whether he really had a welcome or not. Believe me, when old Laban saw those rings, he knew it was a very wealthy guest. Uncle Laban is not one to miss a deal. (If you doubt that, ask Jacob later on. Jacob found out that Uncle Laban was a real trader; in fact, he was a better trader than Jacob was.) So Laban went out to welcome the servant.

And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels [[Gen. 24:31](#)].

Even old Laban recognized the fact that there was the living God, the Creator, the one God.

And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him [[Gen. 24:32](#)].

Again, we have this footwashing ceremony. Note that there are quite a few men who have come with this servant. The servant is entertained royally in this home -- Uncle Laban sees to that.

We have here a marvelous picture of the relationship of Christ and the church. One of the figures of speech that is used in the New Testament is that the church is someday to become the bride of Christ. This is the way the church is being won today, through the Holy Spirit whom the Father and the Son have sent into the world. The Spirit of God, like the servant of Abraham, has come to talk about Another, to take the things of Christ and show them unto us. As this servant has gone to get a bride for Isaac, so the Spirit of God is in the world to call out a bride for Christ. Notice the marvelous dramatic effect that we have here. This is an exciting story and a wonderful record of that day.

And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on [[Gen. 24:33](#)].

Abraham's servant says, "Before I can eat, I want to tell you my mission." This is also characteristic of the Holy Spirit who has come into the world to tell about Another. That is primary business as far as God is concerned. I know that there are other businesses that are very important: the business of our government, the great business of the news media, and the great corporations, the automobile and the airplane companies. All this is important, great business. But God is not continuing to deal with this world because of General Motors or the government in Washington, D.C. (whether Republican or Democrat). The stock market on Wall Street is of no great concern in heaven. The thing that is primary as far as God is concerned is to get the gospel out to the peoples of the world. The Spirit of God is here to put this first. The servant of Abraham will not eat before he has spoken, and so they tell him to speak on.

And he said, I am Abraham's servant [[Gen. 24:34](#)].

Notice that his name is not given. Likewise, the Lord Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will not speak of Himself, but He will take the things of Mine and show them unto you (see [John 16:13-15](#)). By the way, what is the name of the Holy Spirit? He has no name. He does not come to speak of Himself; He has come to speak of Another, of Christ. Similarly, this servant is not named but is simply called a servant of Abraham.

And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses [[Gen. 24:35](#)].

The servant tells about the father's house. And that is something that the Spirit of God would have us know about. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment -- those are the three things that He talks about to the lost world. He would have us know that the judgment is upon a sinful earth and upon mankind. Men are lost today because they are sinners. I hear it said that men are lost because they reject Christ. They are not lost because they reject Christ; they are lost because they are sinners. Whether they have heard about Him or not, they are lost sinners. That is the condition of man today. The Holy Spirit has come to let us know that there is a Savior who has borne our judgment and who has been made over to us righteousness and that we can have a standing in heaven. The Holy Spirit has come to speak of Another.

"And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly." And, my friend, our Heavenly Father is rich today in cattle and in goods. The cattle on a thousand hills are His. How great our Father is!

And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath [[Gen. 24:36](#)].

In an infinitely greater way, the Lord Jesus is the Inheritor, and we are joint heirs with Him today. The servant of Abraham has come to tell this family that he is after a bride for his master's son who is going to inherit all things.

And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell [[Gen. 24:37](#)].

The Holy Spirit is calling out sinners, but they are sinners who are ". . . born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" ([1Pet. 1:23](#)). These are the ones He is calling out -- yes, sinners -- but they have been made children of God. ". . . If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature . . ." ([2Cor. 5:17](#)). God is not taking "Canaanites"; His children must be transformed.

But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son.

And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left [[Gen. 24:38-49](#)].

Laban is the spokesman for this family. Listen to him:

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken [[Gen. 24:50-51](#)].

They say, "As far as we are concerned, this is of the Lord. You go ahead and take Rebekah."

And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.

And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things [[Gen. 24:52-53](#)].

This is the way the Spirit gives to the children of God. We have the earnest, the guarantee, of the Spirit when we come to Christ. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, we have access, we have joy, we have a hope, and we have the Holy Spirit (see [Rom. 5:1-5](#)). These are the wonderful things that have been made over to the believer today.

And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go [[Gen. 24:54-55](#)].

The very next morning this servant says, "I want to be on my way." I'll tell you, this is big business for him! And the brother says, "What's your hurry? Give us at least ten days to tell her good-bye. After all, we had better talk this over with her."

And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.

And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth [[Gen. 24:56-57](#)].

We have come to this very important part that I think is quite wonderful. Don't miss this.

And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go [[Gen. 24:58](#)].

Let's take another look at this picture. It is an oriental scene, couched way back yonder in the beginning of time, at the dawn of humanity, in a way. Although I am confident that man had been on this earth thousands of years at this time, as far as we are concerned, this was approximately four thousand years ago. This family is entertaining a guest, a stranger, and they are entertaining him royally. They have fed his camels and taken care of the servants. They have set meat before him, a real feast, but he wanted to state his business.

And so he tells his strange business. He has come to get a bride for his master's son, Isaac. I can see this servant as he brings out the gifts to give to this family -- gold and silver trinkets. Abraham, you must remember, was a very rich man. Then the servant begins to tell about the master. As he speaks, I see that family circle around the fire, and in the background, standing just beyond the others, I see a very beautiful girl with deep brown eyes. She is listening intently. She hears the servant tell about Abraham and about how Isaac was born. The servant tells about Isaac's miraculous birth and about his life. Then he tells about the day that his father took him yonder to the top of Mount Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice and how God spared him and would not take his life but gave him back to the father alive. And finally he tells how the father has sent him, a servant, to get a bride for Isaac. They do not want to get a bride for him from among the Canaanites. They must get one who is of like mind, one who has the same capacity for the living God, one who is born again of the Word of God. He is looking for a bride.

Rebekah has been listening all this time, and now they turn to her. No one has paid much attention to her up to this point, but now all eyes turn to her, and they say, "Rebekah, what about it? Will you go with this man?" She does not hedge or fudge or beat around the bush or hesitate. She says, "I will go."

Have you ever noticed that the men whom the Lord Jesus called as His disciples made the same instant decision? They left their nets and followed Him. Oh, I know that they went back a couple of times, but there came a day when they broke loose from those nets, and they never went back to them. They followed Him; they went with Him. The Holy Spirit is still calling today. He is the One who has taken the servant's place. You see, the Father and the Spirit sent the Son into the world to die for the world. And when the Son went back to heaven, He said He would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. The Spirit has now come into the world, and He is calling out a bride. He is saying, "Will you go? Here is the One who died for you. He will save you. You have to be redeemed first. You have to come as a sinner to Him, take your rightful position, and accept Him as Savior. When you do, you will be born again; you will become a child of God and be put into the church that is going to be presented to Him someday as a bride." The question is: Will you go? Will you accept the invitation? Will you trust Christ as your Savior? This is not something about which you can beat around the bush -- you either do it or you don't.

I never shall forget the time that I was speaking in a certain place in Texas. I presented Christ, and then I asked, "Will you accept Him?" I really wasn't through preaching, but I never shall forget a young man who sat there, and I could tell he was interested. He got up right there and then and walked down. It had a tremendous effect upon the audience. He was not wishywashy; there wasn't anything uncertain about him. My, I love a clean-cut decision like that! That is the way He wants you, my friend. That is the way He will accept you, and it is the only way He will accept you.

This does not end the story. They start out now, and they are going back to the Promised Land.

And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister,
be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed
possess the gate of those which hate them [[Gen. 24:59-60](#)].

This prophecy has already been fulfilled. We are not talking here about unfulfilled, but fulfilled, prophecy.

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the
camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and
went his way [[Gen. 24:61](#)].

They had a long trip back. We are not told anything about this trip, but I know that it is not easy riding a camel. I rode one from the little village outside of Cairo down to the pyramids -- and that's as far as I want to ride on a camel! They call them "the ships of the desert." Well, it was as rough as any trip I have ever had on a boat. It was rough! They are not easy to ride, but imagine riding on those camels across the desert. I can see them after a hard day on that hot desert. At evening they stop at an oasis, the campfire is built, and they have their evening meal. As they are sitting there before going to bed to get their sleep, I hear Rebekah say to this servant, "Tell me about Isaac again." The servant says, "What do you want me to tell you?" She says, "Tell me about the way he was born. Tell me about the way his father offered him on the altar." It was like our song, "Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and His love!" And the servant says, "I told you that last night." Rebekah says, "I know, but tell it again. Tell it again." And so the servant tells it again. It never grows old. That night Rebekah has that sweet sleep, dreaming of the time when she will meet this one. The next day they start out on the journey again, and the desert isn't quite as hot, and the camel isn't quite as rough. But it is a long ways, and so they continue until they finally come in sight of the land of promise. They enter it and come down to Lahai-roi.

And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in
the south country [[Gen. 24:62](#)].

This is way down in the pleasant country of Hebron and Beer-sheba.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he
lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming
[[Gen. 24:63](#)].

In this human episode, we are given a view of the coming of Christ for His bride. Many people are saying, "Won't it be wonderful when the Lord comes and we will be caught up with Him?" There is another view, and that is of those who will be with Him when He comes. Most of the church has already gone through the doorway of death, and they will be coming with Him when He comes. Their bodies will be raised and their spirits and bodies joined together. Those who are alive are to be caught up with the dead to meet the Lord in the air. Those who have gone before in death are going to see Him when He arises from the right hand of the Father and starts out to call His church to meet Him in the air. This is the picture, and what a glorious picture it is!

And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she
lighted off the camel.

For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself [[Gen. 24:64-65](#)].

We as the bride of Christ will have to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, but He has been made over to us righteousness. He was delivered for our offenses, and He was raised for our justification in order that we might have a righteousness which will enable us to stand before God.

Rebekah, seeing a man walking toward them, asks who he is. Throughout the long journey she has come to know about him, but now she is to see him face to face. This is similar to our position even now. As Peter expressed it, "Whom having not seen, ye love . . ." ([1Peter 1:8](#)). I wonder: When He does come, are we going to know Him? In a song there are these words: "I shall know Him, I shall know Him by the prints of the nails in His hands." I think this is the way that we are going to know Him when He comes. What a glorious, wonderful, beautiful picture we have before us!

And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done [[Gen. 24:66](#)].

The Holy Spirit has sealed us and will deliver us to Christ at the day of redemption. Believe me, it was certain that this servant of Abraham's was going to get the bride to Isaac.

Now this is the union of Isaac and Rebekah --

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death [[Gen. 24:67](#)].

"And he loved her" -- Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. "And Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." This reveals to us that Christ gains a great deal in our salvation. He wants us; He longs for us. Oh, that you and I might be faithful to Him, my beloved!

Chapter 25

THEME: Abraham marries Keturah; Abraham dies; Esau and Jacob

This is another great chapter of the Bible. It records the death of Abraham and the birth of the twins, Esau and Jacob, to Isaac and Rebekah. It gives the generations of Ishmael and also the generations of Isaac. Then there is the incident relative to the birthright. So this is a remarkable chapter, and it covers a great deal of ground.

This chapter concludes the account of Abraham's life, but, frankly, his story ended back in chapter 23 when he sent the servant out to get a bride for Isaac.

Abraham Marries Keturah (25:1-2)

Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah [[Gen. 25:1-2](#)].

Now he has quite a family. He had his biggest family after the death of Sarah. Somebody will raise the question, "I thought that at the time of the birth of Isaac Abraham was dead as far as his capability of bringing a child into the world." Granted, he was. But when God does something, He really does it. This is the reason I believe that anything God does bears His signature. Right here we see that this man Abraham was not only able to bring Isaac into the world, but he now brings in this great family of children.

The interesting thing that we have before us here is the mention of Medan and Midian. The other boys will have nations come from them also, but I can't identify them. I'm not interested in them because they do not cross our pathway in Scripture, but Midian does. We will find later that Moses will go down into the land of Midian and take a wife from there. Remember that the Midianites are in the line of Abraham and so are the Medanites. So we find here the fact that there are other sons of Abraham, but the Lord has said it is through Isaac that Abraham's seed is called -- not through any of these other sons. It is not through Ishmael, nor through Midian, nor Medan. All of these were nomads of the desert.

Abraham Dies (25:5-11)

And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife [[Gen. 25:5-10](#)].

Ishmael comes for the funeral because, after all, Abraham is his father. So Isaac and Ishmael together bury Abraham. Then Isaac goes down to live at the place where he first met Rebekah.

And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi [[Gen. 25:11](#)].

In [verses 12](#) to 18 we have the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham. The list of them is given here. I call to your attention again the fact that the Holy Spirit uses this method in the Book of Genesis. The rejected line is given first and then set aside and not mentioned anymore. Then the

line that is leading to Christ is given and followed. So it is after the line of Ishmael is given that we come to the line of Isaac.

Esau And Jacob (25:19-34)

And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac [[Gen. 25:19](#)].

This is the line we are going to follow. "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob" is the way the first chapter of Matthew begins. Each of these men had other sons, as we have seen. Abraham had quite a few sons, but the genealogy of those men is not followed. It is the genealogy of Isaac that is followed. You can forget Ishmael and Midian and Medan and all the rest. They will cross paths with the descendants of Isaac time and again, but we will not follow their lines.

And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived [[Gen. 25:20-21](#)].

It is interesting that Rebekah, like Sarah, was barren. But Isaac pled with God on her behalf, and now she is pregnant with twins.

And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD [[Gen. 25:22](#)].

The struggle of these two boys, which began before their birth, represents the struggle which still goes on in the world today. There is a struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil, between the Spirit and the flesh. Every child of God knows something of this struggle which Paul sets before us in the seventh chapter of Romans.

Rebekah didn't understand the struggle which was going on within her, and she went to the Lord with the question, "Why am I thus?"

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger [[Gen. 25:23](#)].

God makes the statement to her that the elder shall serve the younger. She should have believed it, and her younger son should have believed it.

And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau [[Gen. 25:24-25](#)].

The name Esau means "red" or "earth-colored." Because he is born first, he is considered the elder. But the elder is to serve the younger.

And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them [[Gen. 25:26](#)].

Isaac and Rebekah had been married for about twenty years before the children were born. The older one was Esau, and they called him "Red," if you please. Jacob took hold on Esau's heel; so they called him Jacob, meaning the usurper, because he was trying to become the elder or to take his place -- but God had already promised that to him.

And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents [[Gen. 25:27](#)].

Now we will look at these two boys as they grow up in this home. Here they are, twins, but no two boys were ever more different than these two. They not only struggled in the womb, but they are against each other from here on out. They have absolutely different viewpoints, different philosophies of life. Their thinking is different, and their attitudes are different. At the beginning, I must confess, Esau is more attractive than Jacob. But we learn that one can't always judge by the outward sign. We must judge by what takes place on the inside. We learn that in this particular case.

"The boys grew." This fellow Esau was a cunning hunter, the outdoor boy, the athletic type. He is the one we would call the all-American boy today. He went in for sports. He went in for everything that was physical, but he had no understanding or capacity or desire for spiritual things. He was only interested in that which was physical. He represents the flesh.

Jacob was a plain man. I think that you can make of that anything you want to. He lived indoors. He was mama's boy and was tied to her apron strings. You will notice that he did what she told him to do. Jacob is really a mama's boy.

And this boy Esau is papa's boy --

And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob [[Gen. 25:28](#)].

Here is the problem in the home. You feel that under these circumstances they are going to have trouble, and they are. When one parent is partial to one child and the other parent is partial to the other child, you have trouble. That is exactly what took place here.

Isaac loved him because he ate of his venison. Esau went out hunting, and he always got something when he went hunting. He brought home the venison. Isaac liked that, and he liked this outdoor type of boy. Rebekah loved Jacob because he was a mama's boy.

As I have said before, at this juncture the boy Esau is much more attractive than Jacob. He seems to be a more wholesome boy. The boy Jacob is cunning; he tries to be clever. The fact of the matter is that he doesn't mind stooping to do things that are absolutely wrong. (And God will deal with him for this.) The interesting thing is that although Esau was very attractive on the outside, down underneath he really had no capacity for God whatever. If ever there was a man of the world, he is that man. He is just a physical man and that is all. That is all that he lived for.

Down underneath in Jacob there was a desire for the things that are spiritual. It took God a long time to rub off all the debris that was on top and to remove all the coverings in order to get down to where the spiritual desire was, but He finally did it. Before we are through with our study of Jacob (and his story goes almost all the way through the Book of Genesis), we will see that he was God's man all along, although he didn't demonstrate it until late in life.

Now we are told of an incident which took place in the home. You can well understand that the partiality shown by both father and mother would cause difficulty and conflict. It could not be called a happy home.

And Jacob *sod pottage*: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:

And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? [[Gen. 25:29-32](#)].

This incident reveals the nature of both of these men. Esau came from the field. He had been outdoors, and he was tired. He was not starving to death as some would imply. No one who had been brought up in the home of Abraham would starve to death. There would always be something for him to eat. The thing was that there was nothing prepared right at that moment but this pottage, this stew, which Jacob had made. Jacob was the indoor boy. Evidently he was a good chef.

"Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red (notice in your King James Version that the word pottage is in italics, meaning that the word has been supplied by the translators); for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom." Edom means red or earthy just as Esau does. This man asks for some of the stew, and Jacob saw his chance. He is a trickster and a traitor, and he wanted the birthright. He said, "Sell me this day thy birthright."

Let's stop and look for a minute at the value of the birthright and what it means. It means that the one who had it was the head of the house. It also means that the one who had it was the priest of the family. In this particular family, it means that the one who had it would be the one who would be in the line that would lead to Christ. Do you think that Esau had valued it at all? Jacob knew that he didn't. He attached no importance to it, and he didn't want to be the priest of the family. In fact, that's the last thing that he wanted to be.

In our day, sometimes when a Christian is asked to do something for the cause of Christ, he replies, "Oh, I'm not a preacher; I can't do that!" There are too many folk today who do not want to do that which is spiritual. They don't even want to give the impression that they are interested in spiritual things.

That was Esau. He didn't want to give that impression. If anyone would have called him "deacon" or "preacher," it would have insulted him. He didn't want the birthright. He

didn't care about being in the line that led to Christ. No one could have cared less about being in that line.

Jacob sees this, and he says to him, "I'll tell you what I'll do, if you'll give me your birthright, I'll give you a bowl of stew." Esau was very happy with the bargain. He said, "I'll be very happy to do it; what profit is the birthright to me? What do I care about the birthright? I'd rather have a bowl of stew." That is the value which he attached to spiritual things.

Let us remember that Jacob also was wrong in what he did. God had promised, "The elder shall serve the younger." The birthright is coming to Jacob in God's own time. Jacob can't wait; so he reaches out to take that which God has promised him. He takes it in a clever, tricky fashion. He should have waited for God to give it to him.

This man operated on the principle that he would do what he could for himself. He thought that as long as he could help himself there was no reason to look to God to perform it. He felt thoroughly capable of taking care of his business. At the beginning he really did rather well as far as the world would measure him. But there came a day when God sent this man off to college, and Uncle Laban was the president of the college. It was known as the college of hard knocks, and Jacob was going to learn a few things in the college of hard knocks. But here he is still operating on the principle that he is clever enough to get what is coming to him.

And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright [[Gen. 25:33-34](#)].

"Esau despised his birthright" is the important thing to see at this juncture. So Esau sat down and ate his stew. He had surrendered his birthright because it meant nothing to him. Nothing that was spiritual meant anything to him. Unfortunately, I'm afraid we have church members like that. They have no spiritual capacity and no understanding of spiritual truths. I believe that the mark of a true Christian is one whom the Spirit of God can teach and guide. It is as if a man today had a very valuable heirloom, let's say an old family Bible which had belonged to his grandfather. Another grandson wants it and offers to give him a quarter for it. So the owner says, "Give me the twenty-five cents because I was going to throw the old thing away anyway." That is exactly what Esau would have done.

But Jacob is wrong also, and we'll see more of his cleverness and trickery in chapter 27.

Chapter 26

THEME: God reaffirms His covenant to Isaac; Isaac misrepresents Rebekah; Isaac in Gerar; Isaac goes to Beer-sheba

When I was a much younger preacher, this chapter did not seem to be very exciting. It is quite colorless and uninteresting, which is especially noticeable after we have studied a

man like Abraham and an exciting man like Jacob who is to follow. This chapter is about Isaac. In fact, it is the only chapter that is really about Isaac, and it just isn't very thrilling. All he does is dig wells. However, in later years I've come to examine these chapters and have found that God has a message for us in this also. In fact, it is a very important message, and Paul stated it quite accurately: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" ([Rom. 15:4](#)). This is a chapter that teaches patience, and some of us need that -- certainly I am in that category. Yet, we would not have you get the impression that patience is all that God wants of us. The Lord also had men like Abraham, like Jacob, and like David, men who were real go-getters and who were aggressive. God can use that also. But the life of Isaac has a great message for many of us. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" ([2Tim. 3:16-17](#)). With that in mind, let us come to this chapter.

Isaac, the beloved son, has the covenant confirmed to him. Then we find him dropping into the same sin of unbelief as his father Abraham had done. Finally, we see him digging wells in the land of Gerar. This doesn't seem to be very exciting but there is a message here for us; so let us not miss it.

God Reaffirms His Covenant To Isaac (26:1-5)

And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar [[Gen. 26:1](#)].

This is now the second famine that is mentioned. You remember the famine in the days of Abraham when Abraham and Lot took off for Egypt.

And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of [[Gen. 26:2](#)].

Why did God say that to Isaac? Well, he had an example before him of his father who had run off down to the land of Egypt. This reveals the fact that "like father, like son," sins are carried from father to son. You can talk about the generation gap all you want, but there is no generation gap of sin. It just flows right from one generation to the other. Generally, the son makes very much the same mistakes that the father did, unless something intervenes.

So God gives definite instructions to Isaac at the time of famine. And He confirms the covenant which He had made with Abraham.

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed [[Gen. 26:3-4](#)].

God says to Isaac, "Don't leave this land, don't go down to Egypt. I want to confirm with you the covenant which I made with Abraham." And He repeats the threefold promise: (1) the land -- "I will give unto thy seed all these countries"; (2) the nation -- "I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven"; (3) the blessing -- "and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws [[Gen. 26:5](#)].

At this point God had not yet given the Mosaic Law; Abraham was not under the Mosaic system. However, the important thing is that, when God told Abraham something, he believed God and acted upon it. He demonstrated his faith by action.

We have too many folk today who complain of a lack of reality in their Christian lives. A lady came in to talk to me some time ago who said that she believed but that she just couldn't be sure and that she didn't feel anything. Such uncertainty! I didn't have to talk to her long to find out that there was no action in her life. She was just sitting in the corner, twiddling her thumbs, saying, "I believe," and then expecting some great something to take place. That just doesn't happen. When you believe God, you act upon His promises. If you would call me right now to tell me that there is a certain amount of money in a bank in downtown Los Angeles and that you have put it in there for me and I should go down to get it, do you think I would just sit right here the rest of the day? My friend, if you know me, you would know that by the time you hung up the telephone I would have my hat on my head and I'd be going down there. Faith is what you act on. Faith is something that you step out on. Abraham believed God, and God counted it to him for righteousness. God is now telling Isaac that He wants him to be that same kind of man.

Isaac Misrepresents Rebekah (26:6-11)

And Isaac dwelt in Gerar [[Gen. 26:6](#)].

Gerar is to the south. Abraham and Isaac both lived in the southern part of that land. Actually, Abraham had come into the land up north to Shechem, but he ended up living down in the southern part at Hebron, the "place of communion."

And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon [[Gen. 26:7](#)].

Isaac is repeating the sin of his father. God had warned him not to go to Egypt; so he didn't go there but went to Gerar instead. In Gerar he must have seen the men casting glances toward Rebekah; so he says to her, "You tell them that you're my sister, not my wife." The difference between Abraham and Isaac is that Abraham told half a lie and Isaac told a whole lie. The one he is telling was cut out of the whole cloth.

And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife [[Gen. 26:8](#)].

I guess they were laughing and playing together.

And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her.

And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldst have brought guiltiness upon us [[Gen. 26:9-10](#)].

Isaac had put these people in danger of committing a sin. Then Abimelech went on to say --

And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death [[Gen. 26:11](#)].

Abimelech became a very good friend of Isaac's. Isaac had the respect of the community just as Abraham had had. Both of them were outstanding men. I mention that here because from the rest of the chapter we might not get the impression that Isaac is an outstanding man.

Isaac In Gerar (26:12-22)

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him [[Gen. 26:12](#)].

God is with him, you see. That is the blessing that God promised to these people from the day He called Abraham. It was an earthly blessing. Later on when God put them into that land, He told them He would bless them in their basket; that is, it would be filled with foodstuff. God made that promise good when they were walking in fellowship with Him.

We must remember that He is not promising us that blessing. He has promised spiritual blessings to us. We are told that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings, and that is our portion today. But that blessing is on the same terms. It depends on our walk with God. If you will permit Him, He wants to bless you abundantly in your spiritual life. We find here that Isaac is greatly blessed --

And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great [[Gen. 26:13](#)].

Don't miss the fact that Isaac is greatly blessed. His field brings forth an hundredfold! The impression some of us have is that Abraham was outstanding, and Jacob was also, but not Isaac. Let me say that Isaac is also outstanding.

It is significant that the life of Isaac is tied in with that of Abraham. Isaac's birth and his life are interwoven with Abraham's experiences. Although Isaac was important when he was offered there upon the altar, again it was Abraham and Isaac together. Why should it be so presented? Well, we have already seen that all these things happened unto them for examples to us. It presents a wonderful picture of the intimacy between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father. Jesus said, ". . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . ." ([John 14:9](#)). And in the high priestly prayer of Jesus, He said, ". . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" ([John 17:4](#)). Also, He said, ". . . My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" ([John 5:17](#)). Therefore, it is very proper that the story of Isaac and the story of Abraham be identified together.

Now here in the chapter before us we see Isaac standing on his own two feet, and he doesn't look too attractive. He exhibits a weakness and repeats the sin of Abraham. However, the Word of God makes it clear that Isaac was a very great man in that land --

For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him [[Gen. 26:14](#)].

The Philistines couldn't stand to see all this prosperity --

For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth [[Gen. 26:15](#)].

Abraham had been digging wells in that land, and now his son comes along and the wells become his. But he would go out in the morning and find that the wells were all filled up. This was done by the Philistines and, by the way, this is the first mention of the enmity of the Philistines. This led to continual warfare later on in the days of David.

And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we [[Gen. 26:16](#)].

Notice the importance of Isaac at this time.

And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there [[Gen. 26:17](#)].

This man Abimelech said, "You are causing a great deal of difficulty now, and it would be better if you left." He had great respect for Isaac, as you can see.

Now this is a part of Isaac's life that looks like weakness, but it is not. Notice that he returns back to the land where his father Abraham had been --

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him [[Gen. 26:18-20](#)].

This reveals the struggle that was carried on.

I feel that the water is a picture of the Word of God. We are to drink deeply of it. It is called the "water of the Word" and is for drinking purposes to slake our thirst, and it is also for washing. Jesus said that we are cleansed through the Word which He has spoken.

Water is a very necessary item in life. You can't have life without water. You can fly over the deserts of Arizona, New Mexico, and California and see plenty of arid land. Then all of a sudden you see an area of lush green and wonder what has happened down there. Water is the only explanation.

And, my friend, water is the explanation for the differences between God's children in any church -- the water of the Word of God. There is a great difference in the lives of believers who study God's Word. And there will be a struggle. I think that you will always have to pay a price if you are really going to study the Word of God. The devil will permit you to do anything except get into the Word of God.

And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land [[Gen. 26:21-22](#)].

Then he calls the well Rehoboth. It means "there is room for us." Before that he would dig a well and they would take it away from him. He'd move up, dig another one, and they would take that away from him. He would just keep moving up. This certainly reveals that Isaac is a man of peace and a man of patience. David wouldn't have done this, I can tell you that. Simon Peter wouldn't have done that. And if you want to know the truth, Vernon McGee wouldn't have done that. It is a real lesson for us here. This is especially applicable when we apply it to the study of the Word of God.

Isaac Goes To Beer-sheba (26:23-35)

And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.

And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake [[Gen. 26:23-24](#)].

God appears to him to comfort him. God appeared to all the patriarchs with the exception of Joseph. He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well [[Gen. 26:25](#)].

He goes on again, digging wells. You can always put a well down next to Isaac. You can put an altar down next to Abraham, and you can put a tent down next to Jacob, as we shall see later on.

Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army.

And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?

And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee

away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD [[Gen. 26:26-29](#)].

Although Isaac almost seems weak in his dealing with the men of Gerar, the king of Gerar was so impressed that he followed Isaac to Beer-sheba in order to establish good relations. The influence of Isaac in that land was not that of a weak man.

And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite:

Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah [[Gen. 26:34-35](#)].

In the next chapter we will see Jacob in his true colors. Thereby hangs a tale.

Chapter 27

THEME: Jacob takes Esau's birthright; Jacob flees to Laban

This chapter has as its theme Jacob and Rebekah conniving to get the blessing of Isaac for Jacob. It is the blessing which Isaac intended for Esau. You see, Jacob wanted the blessing of his father. He knew God had promised his mother that the elder would serve the younger; so the blessing was his already. However, he did not believe God. Rebekah, his mother, did not believe God. Evidently Isaac, the father, didn't believe God or he would never have attempted to bypass Jacob and give the blessing to Esau. He followed his own feelings and appetite in contradiction to the distinct Word of God.

The method Jacob used in obtaining the birthright cannot be supported on any grounds whatsoever. He used fraud and deceit. His conduct was despicable. God did not condone this any more than He condoned the conduct of Sarah and Abraham in the matter of Hagar and Ishmael. God could not use the trickery and cleverness of Jacob. As we shall see, God deals with this man in a very definite way. Jacob had to pay for his sin in the same coin in which he sinned. You will note that as we get into this chapter.

Chapter 26 concluded with Esau, who was about forty years old, marrying two Hittite women. This was a grief to Isaac and to Rebekah. Now they recognize that, if Jacob is not to marry a Hittite or a Philistine, he must be sent away to Haran where Isaac got his bride from the family of Abraham.

Jacob Takes Esau's Birthright (27:1-40)

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I.

And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison;

And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die [[Gen. 27:1-4](#)].

We have seen that Isaac was an outstanding man, a great man. Abimelech and the Philistines came to make a treaty with him since they feared him. He was patient and peace loving but also prominent and powerful. Here, however, he reveals that weakness of the flesh. All during his life, Esau had been his favorite while Jacob had been the favorite of Rebekah. Esau was the outdoor boy who would go out and bring in a deer or some other animal. He would barbecue it, and the old man would enjoy it. Now Isaac is very old and he wants to bless his favorite son. He knows very well that God has said the elder will serve the younger, but he bypasses that because he wants to bless Esau. So he tells Esau to go out and bring in some meat and he will bless him because of it. What a revelation this is of this family.

Have you noticed the family strife since we have come to this last major section of Genesis? There was strife in the family of Abraham because of Hagar. Now there is strife in this family over these twins.

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee [[Gen. 27:5-8](#)].

Rebekah overheard what Isaac said. Jacob is her favorite; so she conceives this deceitful plan. It is absolute trickery, and it cannot be condoned on any basis whatever. God is recording it as history, but He condemns it. We will see that. Remember the things that are being done here, and later you will see the chickens come home to roost for Jacob. Now Rebekah goes on to say to him:

Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man [[Gen. 27:9-11](#)].

Esau was not only an outdoor man and a red man, but he was also a hairy man.

My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing [[Gen. 27:12](#)].

Not only will he seem to be a deceiver; he is a deceiver.

And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice, and go fetch me them.

And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob [[Gen. 27:13-17](#)].

My friend, I can't help but comment on this. She put that skin of the kid of the goat on the back of his neck and on the back of his hands so that when his father would feel him, he'd think it was Esau. She also dressed him in Esau's clothes so he would smell like him! Apparently the deodorant that Esau was using was not very potent. The fact of the matter is, I think he was like the whimsical story I heard about two men who were working in a very tight place. One of them finally said to the other one, "Wow! I think the deodorant of one of us has quit working." The other fellow answered, "It must be yours because I don't use any!" Well, I don't think that Esau used any either, and I'm not sure he had a shower very often. Even if you couldn't see him, you could smell him.

And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son?

And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me [[Gen. 27:18-20](#)].

Believe me, this boy at this particular point is typical of pious frauds. You find many such frauds even in fundamental circles today. They talk about the Lord leading them. My, sometimes the Lord "leads" them to do some very unusual things! I find out sometimes that Christian men think they can do things that the Mafia would be arrested for. But these men can very piously pray about it and say that it is the Lord's will. Believe me, Jacob at this point is a pious fraud. The Lord had nothing to do with this deception.

And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not.

And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am.

And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed [[Gen. 27:21-27](#)].

You can tell that Isaac suspected something was wrong, but Rebekah knew Isaac very well and she had worked out every detail.

Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:

Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee [[Gen. 27:28-29](#)].

Isaac is giving the blessing which he had received -- he is passing it on. The interesting thing is that it already belonged to Jacob. God had said that it did. God had already blessed Jacob. God is not accepting this deception at all.

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.

And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed [[Gen. 27:30-33](#)].

Somebody may ask whether venison tastes like lamb or goat. It surely does. I remember several years ago when I was pastor in Pasadena that I went deer hunting in Utah with one of the officers of the church. We got a deer, and so we invited the congregation for a dinner just to have a time of good, wholesome fellowship and a lot of fun. We didn't have quite enough meat for all the people; so we bought two lamb legs and cooked that along with the rest of the meat. Nobody could tell the difference, and everyone said the venison was good. Both meats tasted very much alike.

Now Isaac really sees how he has been taken in by this plot.

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing, for me?

And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother: and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck [[Gen. 27:34-40](#)].

Jacob Flees To Laban (27:41-46)

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob [[Gen. 27:41](#)].

Esau is thinking. My father is old and won't live much longer. Just as soon as my father dies, I'll kill Jacob. I'll get rid of him! This is the thought of his heart, and he evidently talked about it to others.

And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran [[Gen. 27:42-43](#)].

Here again we see Rebekah taking things into her own hands. She tells Jacob, "You are going to have to leave home." Little did she know that she would pay for her part in this, her sin. She never saw this boy again. She said she would send him over there for a little while but it was a long while and she died before he got back.

We must remember that Jacob is her favorite. She wants Jacob to go to her brother, Laban, and that is where she will send him. This is where Jacob is going to learn his

lesson. This is where the chickens will come home to roost. Old Uncle Laban is going to put him through school and teach him a few things. Jacob thought he was clever, but Uncle Laban is an expert at cleverness. Poor Jacob will find he is just an amateur, and he is going to cry out to God in desperation before it is all over.

And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away:

Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day? [[Gen. 27:44-45](#)].

Notice that she says she will send him away for a few days. A few days lengthened to twenty years, and during that interval she died. She never saw her boy, her pet, her favorite, again.

We can picture the life of Rebekah during those years when we consider that Esau probably did not think much of his mother after that little episode.

And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me? [[Gen. 27:46](#)].

Remember that Esau had married these heathen, godless women. Already that was ringing sorrow into the home, and even Rebekah was overwhelmed by it. Now she tells Isaac that if Jacob stays there he will probably do the same thing. She could use this as an excellent excuse to get Jacob away from home to protect him from Esau. She has this little conference with Isaac to convince him that the thing to do is to send Jacob back to her family, to her brother Laban. Remember how Abraham's servant had gone there to get her. So now the point is to get Jacob back there to find a wife, but also to get him out of danger. Very frankly, I think that if he had stayed at home, Esau would have tried to kill him. However, the way it turned out, Rebekah was the first to die, and Jacob got back for his father's funeral. But he never again saw his mother.

Chapter 28

THEME: God appears to Jacob at Bethel; Jacob makes a vow

In the previous chapter we saw Jacob doing one of the most despicable things any man could do. He did it at the behest of his mother. You know, sometimes people excuse themselves for being mean by saying it is because their mother didn't love them when they were little. Believe me, Jacob couldn't say that. Jacob was loved and spoiled. When he was asked to do something that was not the honorable thing to do, he did it. He stole the birthright from his brother.

The birthright was already his. The formality of his father giving a blessing wasn't necessary at all. Abraham hadn't given the blessing to Isaac -- God had! And it is God who gave it to Jacob. His trickery was not only unnecessary, but God will deal with him because of it, you can be sure of that.

The plan that Rebekah has now thought of is plausible and logical. It probably was the right thing to do in this case. She didn't mention to Isaac that she wanted to send Jacob to her brother so that he'd get away from the wrath of his brother Esau, but she did mention the fact that he could choose a wife back there from among her family.

In this chapter we will find Jacob leaving home. He comes to Beth-el where God appears to him and confirms to him the covenant made to Abraham.

And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan [[Gen. 28:1](#)].

All the way through the Old Testament we find that God does not want the godly to marry the ungodly. That, again, is my reason for believing that in the sixth chapter of Genesis, where it says the sons of God looked upon the daughters of men, it is saying that the godly line married with the godless line of Cain. This finally resulted in the judgment of the Flood with only one godly man left.

Intermarriage always leads to godlessness. I say this as a caution. I recognize that we are living in a day when young people are not very apt to take advice from an old preacher. They wonder what he knows about it all. Frankly, if you want to know the truth, I know a whole lot about this particular matter. I've done years of counseling and have had many, many couples come to me and have been able to watch them through the years. The story is pretty much the same. A young lady or a young man will say they have met the right person, the one they wish to marry. That person is not a Christian. However, they want to marry that person and win him or her for the Lord. May I say this, young lady, if you cannot win him for the Lord before you get married, you will not win him after you are married. May I say this, young man, if you cannot win her for the Lord before you get married, you will not win her after you are married. God forbids the godly to marry the godless. It always entails sorrow. I have seen literally hundreds of cases, and I have never yet seen a case where it has worked. Never yet! You can't beat God. God has put it down indelibly all the way through the Word that the godly are not to marry the godless. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" ([2Cor. 6:14](#)). The New Testament strictly tells Christians that they are not to be unequally yoked. You don't get unequally yoked by sitting on a platform with an unbeliever, as some critics have accused me of doing! You do it by intermarrying. That's the way you join up with them. And God strictly forbids it.

Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham [[Gen. 28:2-4](#)].

It is obvious now that Isaac understands that God had given the blessing to Abraham, that God had transferred it to him, and that this blessing is to be passed on to his son, Jacob.

And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother [[Gen. 28:5](#)].

If you were to give the nationality of this family, you would have to say they were Syrians because that is what they are called in the Scriptures. Sometimes the question is asked, "Was Abraham a Jew? Was he an Israelite?" No, actually he was not. There were no Israelites until the time of Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. His twelve sons were Israelites. The line came from Abraham, he is the father of the race, but you're not going to call Abraham a Midianite, I hope, and yet he is the father of the Midianites, also.

When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying; Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;

And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram;

And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;

Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife [[Gen. 28:6-9](#)].

Now lest someone misunderstand what I meant when I said we were through with the line of Ishmael, let me say that the Bible will not follow his line. However, his line will be mentioned as it crosses the line leading to Christ. So here, Esau goes out and marries the daughter of Ishmael. He thinks it will please his father. You see what a lack of spiritual perception he has. The Ishmaelites were as much rejected as the Canaanites or the Philistines.

God Appears To Jacob At Bethel (28:10-17)

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep [[Gen. 28:10-11](#)].

The place he has come to, as we shall see in a moment, is Bethel, literally, "the House of God." Bethel is twelve miles north of Jerusalem, and the home which Jacob left was probably twenty-five or thirty miles south of Jerusalem. This means that Jacob covered at least forty miles that first day. You can see that he is really hotfooting it away from Esau. He wants to get as far from him as he can, but the farther he gets away from Esau, the farther he gets away from home.

What do you think he was feeling that night? Well, he was very lonely, that is for sure. He was probably homesick. As far as the record is concerned, this was his first night away from home.

My friend, do you remember the first night that you were away from home? I certainly remember the first night I went away from home. We lived in the country in a little place called Springer, Oklahoma. They tell me it hasn't done any springing since then. It's still a small place, just a wide place in the road. We had some very wonderful friends who lived down the road. I suppose it couldn't have been over a mile, but at that time I thought it was five or more miles. I've been back there, and I was amazed to find out how close together things are. When I was little, I thought it was all pretty well spread out. Well, these people invited me to come down and spend the night. They had a boy about my age -- we were nine or ten, I guess. He had come up to get me, and we went down to his house together. I shall never forget that experience. We had a delicious dinner, a good country dinner, and I enjoyed it that evening with these folks. Then we played hide-and-seek until it got dark which kept me occupied, but every now and then I looked into the darkness and began to get just a little homesick. Then someone said it was time to go to bed. They put a pallet down in the front room, and I put on the little nightshirt that I had brought under my arm, and I lay down on that pallet. Friend, I have never been so lonely in all my life. Homesick! Oh, how I wanted to go home! I rolled and tossed there for a long time. I finally dozed off and I slept for a while, but I awoke very early in the morning. Do you know what I did? I took off my nightshirt and put on my clothes, put my nightshirt under my arm and started running home. I didn't stop until I got there. Nobody was up, but I was sure glad to be home. First night away from home. After that, I went a long way from home, but I never was more homesick than I was that first night.

I have often wondered about Jacob. He's actually a man now, a pretty big boy, but I think he is homesick. This is the first time he is away from Rebekah. He's been tied to his mama's apron strings all of his life, and now he is untied. He is out on his own, and this is his first night away from home.

Notice what happens. He lies down and puts stones for pillows. Bethel is a dreary place. It has been described as a bleak moorland with large, bare rocks exposed. It is twelve hundred feet above sea level, in the hills. There are many places out in the desert of California that would correspond to it.

When traveling around in the proximity of Bethel, I was with a bus tour. Others wanted to go other places which to me weren't nearly as important as Bethel. We drove within about a half mile of it and I wanted to walk to it, but the bus driver said we didn't have time. I could see it in the distance, and the topography looked bleak and forbidding. Yet this was the high point in the spiritual life of Jacob, not only at this time but also later in his life. So this is the place he came to, and here he lay down to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land

whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed [[Gen. 28:12-13](#)].

It was right in that area, by the way, where God first appeared to Abraham after he had reached the land of Palestine.

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed [[Gen. 28:14](#)].

Now God is giving to Jacob exactly what He had given first to Abraham; He had repeated it to Isaac, and now He confirms it, and He reaffirms to Jacob that He will do this.

And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of [[Gen. 28:15](#)].

You can see that this would be comforting and helpful to a lonesome, homesick boy who really had to leave home in a hurry. He is on his way to a far country, and this first night God says to him, "I'm going to be with you, Jacob, and I'm going to bring you back to this land."

The vision that God gave to him in the dream was of a ladder that reached up to heaven. What does that ladder mean? Well, the Lord Jesus interpreted it when He called Nathanael, as recorded in [John 1:45-51](#). By the way, Nathanael was a wiseacre, and when he heard of Jesus, he said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Our Lord dealt with this fellow. Nathanael asked, "How in the world do you know me like that?" And Jesus said, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael's response was, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." He was pretty easy to convince, although he was a skeptic at the beginning. Let me give you the exact quote: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" ([John 1:50-51](#)).

What is that ladder? That ladder is Christ. The angels were ascending and descending upon the Son of man. The angels ministered to Him; they were subject to His command. Nathanael will hear from the top of that ladder the voice of God, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." My friend, God is speaking to mankind through Christ in our day. We cannot come to the Father directly. Every now and then I hear someone say in a testimony, "When I was converted, I came directly to God. I have access to God." We do not, my friend. We come through Christ; we have access to the Father through Christ. That is the only way we can get into God's presence. The Lord Jesus said, ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" ([John 14:6](#)). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the ladder -- not one that we can climb but one that we can trust.

This truth was given first to Jacob, the usurper. To Nathanael our Lord said, "You are an Israelite in whom there is no guile" -- that is, no Jacob. Nathanael was a wiseacre, a

humorist, but he was not a trickster like Jacob. But this man, Jacob -- God is going to have to deal with him. God has given him this wonderful, glorious promise, but, oh, Jacob has so much to learn!

Isn't that true of all of us today? No wonder God has to school us. No wonder God has to discipline us. He scourges every son whom He receives. He disciplines. He did it to Abraham and He did it to Isaac. He is going to do it to Jacob. Up to this point, everything has been going Jacob's way. I received a letter from a couple who had lost their two-year-old boy suddenly one night. Up to that time everything had been going their way. They were church members, but they were hypocrites. So many people are just members of the church, yet they don't know the Lord personally. The Lord has to shake us. He allows trials to come to us to discipline us. They put iron in our backbone; they put courage in our lives and enable us to stand for God.

Jacob has a long way to go. Notice what he does --

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven [[Gen. 28:16-17](#)].

This is the passage of Scripture that I use many times in dedicating a new church. "How dreadful is this place!" I think I shock some people, especially when the congregation has come in to dedicate a lovely new facility. I get up and look around and say, "How dreadful is this place." During the rest of the time I try to win them back to being friends of mine by telling them that the place is dreadful only for a fellow like Jacob, a sinner, trying to run away from God. Every house of God, every church, ought to be a dreadful place to any sinner running away from God. It is the place where the sinner ought to be able to meet God, come face to face with God, through the Ladder who has been sent down from heaven, even Christ.

When Jacob ran away from home, he had a limited view of God. He thought that when he ran away from home, he was running away from God, also. But he found that he had not left God back home. He exclaimed, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not!"

Jacob Makes A Vow (28:18-22)

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first [[Gen. 28:18-19](#)].

Now listen to Jacob. He has a lot to learn, and this is an evidence of it.

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God [[Gen. 28:20-21](#)].

What is he doing? He wants to trade with God. He says, "Now, God, if You will do this for me. . . ." But God has already told him that He is going to do every one of these things for him -- "I am going to keep you; I am going to bring you back to this land; I am going to give you this land; and I'm going to give you offspring." Then Jacob turns around and bargains with Him, "If You will do it, then I'll serve You."

God doesn't do business with us that way. He didn't do business that way with Jacob either. If He had, Jacob would never have made it back to that land. God brought him back into that land by His grace and mercy. When Jacob did finally come back to Bethel, he came back a wiser man. Do you know what he came back to do? To worship and praise God for His mercy. God had been merciful to him.

Many people even today say they will serve the Lord if He will do such and such. You won't do anything of the kind, my friend. He doesn't do business that way. He will extend mercy to you, and He will be gracious to you without asking anything in return. But He does say that if you love Him, you will really want to serve Him. That will be the bondage of love. It is the same kind of love a mother has for the little child. She becomes its slave. That's the way that He wants you and me.

And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee [[Gen. 28:22](#)].

So Jacob erects this stone. He is trying to make a deal with God! And a great many of us are trying to make a deal with God. Oh, my friend, He just wants to become your Father through faith in Christ.

Chapter 29

THEME: Jacob meets Rachel; Jacob serves for Rachel; Jacob is deceived

Over this chapter I would like to write: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" ([Gal. 6:7-8](#)). Probably the title that we ought to put over this chapter is "Chickens Come Home to Roost." In the beginning of this chapter we will see that Jacob begins to reap the harvest of his evil doing. The passage in Galatians is written primarily for Christians, but it expresses a universal law of God in every age. It is true in any area of life. You sow corn: you reap corn. You sow cotton; you reap cotton. You sow wheat; you reap wheat. You sow tares; you reap tares.

Examples of this principle run all the way through the Scriptures. For instance, Pharaoh slew the male children of the Hebrews, and in time his son was slain by the death angel. Ahab, through false accusations, had Naboth slain and the dogs licked his blood. God sent His prophet Elijah to Ahab with the message that, as the dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, they would lick the blood of Ahab. And that was literally fulfilled. You remember that David found this to be an inexorable law which was applicable to his own

life. He committed the terrible sins of adultery and murder. God forgave him for his sin. Yet, the chickens came home to roost. He reaped what he had sown. His own daughter was raped and his son slain. Even Paul the apostle felt the weight of this law. He had given his consent at the stoning of Stephen. Later, Paul was taken outside the city of Lystra and was stoned and left for dead.

Jacob is the classic illustration of this inflexible law. Jacob had lived by his wits. He was rather cocky and clever. He had practiced deceit. He would stoop to use shady methods to accomplish his purpose. And he was proud of his cleverness. But he will reap what he has sown.

As we come to this chapter, Jacob leaves Bethel and resumes his journey. After a period of time (I do not know how long), he arrives in Haran.

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place [[Gen. 29:1-3](#)].

We see here the importance of water in that country. It still is a very important item because there is a shortage of it in many places. It must be husbanded and protected; that is why at a certain time during the day the stone was removed from the top of the well, and then everybody watered their sheep -- everybody got the water he needed. Then the stone was put back on to close the well.

Now Jacob arrives on the scene before they take the stone away from the well. Believe me, he is as cocky as ever.

And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we.

And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him [[Gen. 29:4-5](#)].

Oh yes, they knew him. But Jacob didn't know him -- yet. But, oh my, Jacob is going to get acquainted with him.

And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them [[Gen. 29:6-7](#)].

Here Jacob has just arrived in the land and he is telling them how to water their sheep and what they should do! This is typical of him, by the way.

And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep [[Gen. 29:8](#)].

Jacob Meets Rachel (29:9-17)

And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them [[Gen. 29:9](#)].

Rachel is a shepherdess who takes care of the sheep. This was woman's work in that day.

And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother [[Gen. 29:10](#)].

I don't know who told him to water the flock of Laban, but he did it. Jacob is not following anyone's law but his own. He made the rules for the game as he went through life -- that is, the first part of his life. He has a tremendous lesson to learn, and Uncle Laban is the one to teach him.

And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept [[Gen. 29:11](#)].

This verse has always been strange to me. Frankly, kissing that girl and then weeping is hard for me to understand! However, I am of the opinion that this boy had had a lonely trip from the moment he had left home. We need to remember that from Bethel he had to go up by the Sea of Galilee, then up into Syria. He had to cross that desert. I suppose he had many experiences along the way. When he arrived, he was very cocky and greeted the men there in a matter-of-fact way as though he had known them all of their lives. He asks them questions, then probably in an officious way takes the stone from the mouth of the well. I suppose when he greeted this girl who was a member of his mother's family he welled up with emotion and wept. That is the only way I can explain it. But I am sure that the next time he kissed her he didn't weep!

And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father [[Gen. 29:12](#)].

You will notice that he calls himself her father's brother. The Hebrew does not make a lot of the distinctions we make today. We've got it reduced down to whether a person is a kissing cousin or not, but in that day if you were related, you were a brother. That is the way it is translated here and quite properly so. But in English we would say that Jacob was her father's nephew and that he was a son of Rebekah, her father's sister.

And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things [[Gen. 29:13](#)].

I imagine that Jacob had quite a bit to talk about. I wouldn't be surprised to find that he entertained them at dinner with his story of how he tricked his brother to get his

birthright, and how he used trickery to get the blessing, and how clever he was. Probably he told about that night at Bethel, too. "He told Laban all these things."

And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month [[Gen. 29:14](#)].

Laban was convinced now that this was his nephew, and he says, "You're my relative, so come in and make yourself at home."

Now a month goes by, and notice what happens. Jacob is not working. He's a nephew from a far country, and he's come over to visit his uncle. I suppose he felt that he ought to have free room and board there. During that time he's courting this girl, Rachel. At least, he certainly has been casting his eyes in that direction. And I think she was casting her eyes in his direction, too.

Now, I can imagine that it was one morning at breakfast when the next incident took place.

And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be? [[Gen. 29:15](#)].

This Uncle Laban is clever. Who had said anything about going to work? Jacob hadn't. So Uncle Laban is very tactful and says that he doesn't want Jacob to work for him for nothing. He says that he will pay Jacob. Frankly, you don't live with Laban a month without making some sort of an arrangement to pay your board. Uncle Laban is a clever one also, and now he is going to deal with his nephew.

And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel [[Gen. 29:16](#)].

Here we are introduced to another daughter, Leah. Uncle Laban has been watching this boy, and he has noted that his nephew has become very much interested in his daughter Rachel, the younger of the two. The next verse tells us why --

Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured [[Gen. 29:17](#)].

Rachel was a very beautiful girl. Leah was "tender eyed" which is a way of saying that she was not beautiful at all.

In college when we were reading Greek and studying some of the plays of Euripides, when a fellow wanted to say something very nice about his girl, we found in the play that he would call her "cow-eyed." I always laughed about that and thought that I would turn that over in my mind before I ever considered that a compliment. Well now, the next time you meet a cow, take a look at the eyes, and you will see they are beautiful. Ever since I read that play, I have never seen a cow with ugly eyes.

But Leah was not cow-eyed, she was "tender eyed" which meant that she was sort of an ugly duckling.

So Laban has these two daughters, and it is obvious that Jacob is in love with Rachel.

Jacob Serves For Rachel (29:18-22)

And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter [[Gen. 29:18](#)].

We find Jacob was quite moon-eyed. So that morning at breakfast, when Uncle Laban suggested he go to work, he had something in mind himself. He knew that the boy was in love with the girl; so I don't think he was at all surprised at Jacob's answer when he asked what his wages should be. Jacob was willing to work for seven years for Rachel. This man, Laban, was driving a hard bargain.

And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me [[Gen. 29:19](#)].

Laban accepts that bargain.

Now this next verse tells us one of the loveliest things that is said about Jacob. Frankly, in the early years of Jacob's life, the only appearance of anything beautiful or fine or noble is his love for Rachel.

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her [[Gen. 29:20](#)].

You can just see this man working. I tell you, Uncle Laban had him working hard. He worked out in the cold, out in the rain and in all sorts of weather, but he always thought of that girl Rachel. There she was to meet him after a hard day. He was desperately in love with her.

And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast [[Gen. 29:21-22](#)].

Jacob Is Deceived (29:23-32)

Now notice what Uncle Laban is doing --

And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid.

And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn [[Gen. 29:23-26](#)].

At the marriage ceremony in those days, the woman was veiled, heavily veiled, so that she couldn't be seen. Poor Jacob didn't see the girl he was getting until the next morning. Lo and behold, it wasn't Rachel -- it was Leah! At the moment he saw he had been

tricked. I wonder if he didn't recall something of his own father when he, Jacob, had pretended to be the elder. He deceived his father, and that was the reason he had to leave home. You see, God does not approve of that type of conduct. The chickens are now coming home to roost. Jacob pretended to be the elder when he was the younger. Now he thinks he's getting the younger and he gets the elder. The tables are turned now, and it has become an awful thing for Jacob. To Jacob it is a criminal act that Laban has done, but notice how Uncle Laban passes it off. He is an expert at this type of thing. He tells Jacob that there was a little matter in the contract, a clause in the fine print, that he had forgotten to mention to Jacob. It was a custom in their country that the elder daughter must marry first, and the younger daughter could not marry until the elder daughter was married. But Uncle Laban is willing to be very generous in his dealings; so he has an offer to make.

Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years [[Gen. 29:27](#)].

This week, you see, is another seven years. Uncle Laban is getting his money's worth, isn't he? And poor Jacob is really going to school. But he is taking two wives which he shouldn't have done. He will be in trouble before it is over.

And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week; and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also [[Gen. 29:28](#)].

Uncle Laban made Jacob serve twice as long as he originally agreed to. Seven years was long enough, but, believe me, fourteen years is a long time! This arrangement gave Jacob two wives.

You may be thinking, Well, since this is in the Bible, God must approve of polygamy. No, God does not approve of everything that is in the Bible -- that may startle you. For instance, God didn't approve of the devil's lie. God didn't approve of David's sin, and He judged him for it. But the record of both events is inspired -- literally, God-breathed. In other words, God said through the writer, Moses, exactly what He wanted to say. The thing that is inspired is the record of the words God gave to Moses to write down in this Book we call the Bible. In [Genesis 29](#) God gave an accurate record: Jacob did have two wives, and it tells us the way it came about. That is where inspiration comes in. It does not mean that God approved of everything that is recorded in the Bible. Certainly God disapproved of Jacob's having more than one wife.

May I say to you, this man Jacob had plenty of trouble in his family from here on, and it all can be traced back to his own methods which he had used. The chickens are coming home to roost.

And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.

And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me [[Gen. 29:31-32](#)].

Leah is a sad person because she knows her husband loves Rachel rather than her. When she becomes the mother of Reuben, it brings joy to her heart, and she feels that Jacob will love her now.

Reuben is Jacob's firstborn, but he is not the one who will begin the line leading to Christ. Rather, it will be Leah's fourth son, Judah. Judah was the kingly line. David was in this line, and later on, the Lord Jesus Himself, according to the flesh, came from the line of Judah. Reuben lost his position as the firstborn because of his sin. Levi was the priestly tribe. Leah was the mother of some of the outstanding sons of Jacob.

Chapter 30

THEME: Birth of Jacob's sons; birth of Joseph to Rachel; Jacob prepares to leave Laban

When we come to this chapter, we see that God is moving in spite of Jacob's sin. God is not moving because of it, but in spite of it. The theme of the chapter is the family of Jacob and the birth of his sons. Jacob longs to leave Laban, and Jacob makes a shrewd bargain with him.

Birth Of Jacob's Sons (30:1-24)

And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die [[Gen. 30:1](#)].

You see, a woman in that day was disgraced unless she had an offspring, and the more children she had, the better was her position.

And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?

And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her [[Gen. 30:2-3](#)].

We find here Jacob and Rachel reverting to the practice of that day. Remember that Abraham and Sarah had done the same thing. God did not approve of it then, and He is not going to approve of it now. The Bible gives us an accurate record, but that does not mean that God approved of all that was done. In fact, it is quite obvious that He disapproved of this. My, the strife that we have already called to your attention in Abraham's family. It was also in the family of Isaac. Now it is in Jacob's family already -- and he is in for a great deal more trouble.

The next verses of this chapter tell of the birth of two sons of Jacob by Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; two sons by Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; and then the birth of two more sons by Leah.

And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:

And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son [[Gen. 30:22-24](#)].

This is the boy who will go down into the land of Egypt. We will follow him later in the book, as he is quite a remarkable person.

Later on Benjamin will be born to Rachel. We will conclude this chapter by listing the twelve sons of Jacob because they are important. The twelve tribes of Israel will come from them and finally the nation of Israel.

Jacob Prepares To Leave Laban (30:25-39)

And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee [[Gen. 30:25-26](#)].

Now listen to Uncle Laban -- he's not through yet, you may be sure of that!

And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake [[Gen. 30:27](#)].

This is quite interesting. You may recall that Abimelech, king of Gerar, found that he was blessed when Isaac was in his midst. Now Uncle Laban has discovered that God is with Jacob and has blessed him for Jacob's sake. So Uncle Laban says, "My boy, don't rush off; don't leave me. I've been blessed, and I want to raise your wages."

And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it [[Gen. 30:28](#)].

Jacob knows by now that, any time Uncle Laban makes a deal, he is the one who will come off the winner. Jacob has learned this lesson, and he wants to leave.

And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also? [[Gen. 30:29-30](#)].

Listen to Jacob complaining. He is singing the blues! He is saying, "All I've got out of all this service for you are two wives with their two maids and a house full of boys." In fact, he has eleven boys at this point. What in the world is he going to do? How is he going to feed them? He says, "God has blessed you and He has prospered you, and I don't have anything."

And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock:

I will pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire [[Gen. 30:31-32](#)].

In other words, the pure breeds will be Laban's, but the offbreeds, those that are not blue-ribbon cattle, will be Jacob's. Jacob said, "You just let me have these, and that will be my wages." That sounds like a pretty good proposition for Laban.

So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons [[Gen. 30:33-35](#)].

They would not be able to breed with the others. Jacob would take the off-breeds so that only the full breeds would mate and bear offspring, and those would belong to Uncle Laban. The others would be his. Jacob is making a very interesting deal.

And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods.

And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink.

And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted [[Gen. 30:36-39](#)].

There have been various explanations of this. There are those who say this is nothing in the world but pure superstition. Others say it is an old wives' tale and is certainly something which ought not to be in the Bible record. It is my judgment that it is important that this record appears in the Word of God. Of course, there were genetic factors involved, but I don't feel that we should rule out this as being a superstition. The point is that both Laban and Jacob believed that the white streaks in the rods caused the offspring to be ringstraked. That is the important part of the story. Maybe you are too smart to believe it, but these two boys believed it. Regardless of whether or not there was value in it, Jacob is using trickery. He had been quite a trickster, but he has met an uncle who is a better trickster than he is, and now Jacob is trying to make a comeback.

This is all I will say about it at this point, and we will see that the next chapter will throw new light on this entire incident.

Now here is the list of Jacob's twelve sons who will eventually comprise the twelve tribes of the nation Israel.

Born to Leah:

1. Reuben
2. Simeon
3. Levi
4. Judah
5. Issachar
6. Zebulun
7. Dinah, daughter

Born to Bilhah, Rachel's maid:

1. Dan
2. Naphtali

Born to Zilpah, Leah's maid:

1. Gad
2. Asher

Born to Rachel:

1. Joseph
2. Benjamin

Believe me, Jacob had his hands full with these twelve boys! Also, we find that there was a girl, and her name was Dinah.

We will see in the next chapter that God has called Jacob to leave Haran and return to the land which He has promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I am sure that God is thinking of Jacob's children -- He doesn't want them to grow up in the environment of Laban's household.

Chapter 31

THEME: Jacob flees from Haran; the Mizpah covenant

In this chapter we find that Jacob leaves Laban without giving notice. They don't even have a farewell party for him. Laban takes out after him and overtakes him. Finally, Jacob and Laban made another contract, this time not to defraud or hurt each other. Then they separate in an outwardly friendly manner.

We will see that God wants to get Jacob out of that land. He recognizes that the influence of Laban's household is not good for Jacob and his growing family. The boys are going to be heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, and God is anxious to get them out from that environment and back into Abraham's country, the country which He had promised to Abraham.

We are in a section of the Word of God which God has given to minister to our needs. It deals with a man who is a very sinful man in many ways and a man whom God would not give up. You and I can take courage from this. The Lord will never give us up as long as we keep coming back to Him. He will always receive us. If He will take a fellow like Jacob and a fellow like I am, He will take you, my friend.

You will recall that Jacob has had a pretty sad ordeal of twenty years with Uncle Laban. Uncle Laban has really given him a course in the college of hard knocks, and poor Jacob is beginning to wince because of all the pressure he has been under. However, since the new deal which he had made with Laban regarding cattle breeding, Jacob is now getting more than Uncle Laban is getting. Uncle Laban doesn't like it, nor do his sons like it.

And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.

And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before [[Gen. 31:1-2](#)].

Now Jacob has a call from God.

And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock [[Gen. 31:3-4](#)].

God called Jacob to leave, and so he is now preparing to do that. He calls Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field because he is afraid to talk this over at home for fear some servant or possibly even Laban or Laban's sons might overhear him. He doesn't want them to see him plotting with Rachel and Leah.

And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.

And ye know that with all my power I have served your father [[Gen. 31:5-6](#)].

That is one thing upon which we can agree with Jacob and say to his credit. He had worked hard, but I'm of the opinion that we ought to give Laban credit for that. I believe that Laban got his money's worth out of anyone who worked for him.

And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me [[Gen. 31:7](#)].

Notice that ten times in those twenty years old Laban had changed his wages! Poor Jacob. But when he was perplexed and frustrated, not knowing where to turn, God intervened.

If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked.

Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me [[Gen. 31:8-9](#)].

Jacob is explaining to Rachel and Leah that it is God who has blessed him, to the extent that Laban and his sons have become very jealous of him; in fact, they hate him.

Now Jacob tells the actual reason why he wants to leave --

And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob:
And I said, Here am I.

And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which
leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I
have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee [[Gen. 31:11-12](#)].

You probably thought that in the previous chapter I was not giving a satisfactory answer for what had taken place in the breeding of cattle. I was waiting until we came to this portion of Scripture, because God says, "I did it!" We don't need to look for natural explanations, although I am confident that God used one of them. However, since God didn't tell us which one it is, we simply do not know. There are several explanations, and you may take the one you want, but I like this one: God says, "I saw what Laban was doing to you, and I blessed you."

I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and
where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from
this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred [[Gen. 31:13](#)].

"I am the God of Beth-el." God goes back to the time He appeared to this boy when he was running away, that first night away from home which he spent at Bethel.

"Now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred." God wants him to leave Haran because he has at this time eleven boys who are growing up, and they are already beginning to learn some things which they should not be learning. God wants to get Jacob and these boys away from the place of idolatry just as He got Abraham out of a home of idolatry.

And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any
portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?

Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath
quite devoured also our money [[Gen. 31:14-15](#)].

They are saying that certainly, as the daughters of their father, they should receive some inheritance, and that ought to keep Laban from being so antagonistic. But, friend, old Laban cannot be trusted.

Unfortunately, there are many Christians today who demonstrate in the way they handle their own money and the money of others that they cannot be trusted either. This is, I feel, a real test of an individual. I could tell you some stories that would make your hair stand on end. Christians, and Christian leaders, do things with money that ought not to be done.

For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is
ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto
thee, do [[Gen. 31:16](#)].

I admire these two women. They tell Jacob to do whatever he wants to do. They stand with him, and apparently they feel that their father has robbed them.

Jacob Flees From Haran (31:17-42)

Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;

And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's [[Gen. 31:17-19](#)].

Here is a revelation of something that is quite interesting. Jacob rises up and leaves posthaste again. You remember that this is the same way he left home when he was escaping from his brother. Now he is leaving his uncle -- but it is not all his fault this time. It is obvious that he is prepared for this. He has all the cattle and the servants ready to march.

"Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's." I told you that they were in a home of idolatry. God didn't want Jacob's boys to be brought up there. But, you see, Rachel had been brought up in a home of idolatry, and she wanted to take her gods with her. What a primitive notion she had! Even Jacob had thought that he could run away from God when he left his home as a boy. But at Bethel God appeared to him. He found that he couldn't run away from God. In fact many years later David wrote: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [sheol], behold, thou art there" ([Ps. 139:7-8](#)). That is, death won't separate you. "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" ([Ps. 139:9-10](#)). You won't get away from God by even going to the moon. You simply cannot get away from Him.

"And Laban went to shear his sheep." Jacob waited until Laban went out to shear sheep. Probably Laban went quite a few miles away from home because the sheep grazed over a very large area in that day. They still do, for that matter, because it takes a large area to feed them. While Laban is away from home, Jacob just "forgets" to tell him that he is leaving.

And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead [[Gen. 31:20-21](#)].

They have come within sight of Mt. Gilead, which is just east of the Jordan River. They have covered a lot of ground.

And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled.

And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead [[Gen. 31:22-23](#)].

Laban really had been traveling fast to overtake him. You may be sure that Laban doesn't mean any good as far as Jacob is concerned. I am of the opinion that he is angry enough to kill him. But God intervened --

And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad [[Gen. 31:24](#)].

In other words, "You be very careful what you say and do."

Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead [[Gen. 31:25](#)].

Listen to Uncle Laban. He's a clever rascal, by the way. He's been coming, breathing out fire and brimstone, and wanting to recover all the possessions which Jacob had taken. He probably wanted to kill Jacob and take back the two daughters and their children.

And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword?

Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp? [[Gen. 31:26-27](#)].

How clever Uncle Laban is, how diplomatic! He tries to make Jacob feel guilty for depriving his family of wonderful send-off party. He would have had a great celebration and a fond farewell. That's what he says, but I don't think that is what he would have done. Then he goes on to appeal to sentiment.

And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing [[Gen. 31:28](#)].

These "sons" would be his grandsons. They are destined to be very prominent as far as the history of this world is concerned.

It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad [[Gen. 31:29](#)].

Laban lets him know that he didn't mean good by him but that God had prevented him from doing bad.

And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? [[Gen. 31:30](#)].

Now he asks about the stolen gods. Actually, Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the gods. When he answers Laban, he is answering about his running away without letting him know.

And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me [[Gen. 31:31](#)].

Jacob knew that Laban wouldn't have let him take his wives and his family and that which belonged to him.

Now he replies to the charge of the stolen gods --

With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them [[Gen. 31:32](#)].

He is sure no one would have stolen them from Laban. You see, Jacob didn't believe Laban. But if you think that Laban believed Jacob, you're wrong. They had absolutely no confidence in each other. It's been a nice, pleasant twenty years together, hasn't it?

And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maid-servants' tents; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.

And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images [[Gen. 31:33-35](#)].

He really expected one of his daughters to have them. Rachel is quite a clever girl herself, isn't she? She is the daughter of her father! She had taken them and put them in the camel's furniture, which is the box that went on the camel's back. Then she sat down on them and excused herself to her father. She said she couldn't get up because she didn't feel well that day. All the while, she is sitting on them. What a realistic picture we get of this family!

Rachel's taking the teraphim from her father was probably much more serious than we had imagined. The possession of those household gods implied leadership of the family, which meant that Jacob was going to inherit everything old Laban had! That is the reason Laban was so wrought up over it. He surely did not want Jacob to get his estate -- he felt he had gotten too much already.

Jacob gets a little confidence now. They can't locate the images, and Jacob is sure that they aren't anywhere around. He wants to rebuke his father-in-law who has come after him.

And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? [[Gen. 31:36](#)].

Now Jacob voices his complaint. He has passed the course in the college of hard knocks, and now he is getting his degree.

This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten [[Gen. 31:38](#)].

He didn't even get his meals. He had to pay for those.

That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night [[Gen. 31:39](#)].

He couldn't even get any insurance. When a lamb was stolen or killed by a wild animal, Jacob had to pay for it. Believe me, this Laban is a hard taskmaster!

Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes [[Gen. 31:40](#)].

He didn't get a vacation in the summer. When the weather grew cold, he still had to stay out with the sheep and with the animals. Many nights he had to watch to protect the flock.

Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times [[Gen. 31:41](#)].

This is what has happened to Jacob. Here is the man who is clever, who thought that he could get by with sin, but God didn't let him get by with it because God has made it very clear that whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. Jacob refused submission to God at home; so he had to submit to his uncle. Jacob came to receive a wife in dignity, but he was made a servant because God respects the rights of the firstborn. Jacob had deceived his father; so he was deceived by his father-in-law. Jacob, the younger, became as the older. Then he found out that he was given the older when he thought he was getting the younger. He revealed a mercenary spirit that displayed itself in the way he got the birthright, allowing his mother to cover his hands with the skins of kids of goats. Later on, we will see that his own sons will deceive him in very much the same way. They killed a kid and in its blood they dipped Joseph's coat of many colors. He deceived his father about being the favorite son, and he will be deceived about his favorite son, Joseph. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight [[Gen. 31:42](#)].

Jacob has had his day in court. He has vented his grievances. Now he is going to leave Laban. They bid each other good-bye and make a contract.

The Mizpah Covenant (31:43-49)

And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?

Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee [[Gen. 31:43-44](#)].

Jacob set up a stone for a pillar, a heap of stones was gathered, and a contract was made.

And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another [[Gen. 31:48-49](#)].

The words of this contract have been used by young people's groups and other groups as a benediction. I don't think it ought to be used that way because it was a contract made between two rascals who are going to quit stealing from each other and work on somebody else! "The Lord watch between me and thee" is really saying, "May the Lord keep His eye on you so you won't steal from me anymore." That is exactly what these men are saying. And after this, they separate. The pile of stones remained at Mizpah as a boundary line between Laban and Jacob. Each promised not to cross over on the other's side.

Chapter 32

THEME: Crisis in the life of Jacob; wrestling at Peniel; Jacob's name changed to Israel

Chapter 32 is the high point in the life of Jacob and can be called the turning point in his life. However, this is not Jacob's conversion, by any means. In spite of the fact that he was living in the flesh, this man was still God's man. This is the reason that we are told to be very careful about judging folk as to whether they are Christians or not. There are a lot of people who do not look like they are Christians, but I am almost sure that they are. Whether they are or not is in the hands of the Lord. They just don't act like Christians -- that's all; they give no evidence that they are. And this man Jacob gave no such evidence, except in very faint instances when God appeared to him and he did respond in a way.

Jacob, who is God's representative and witness in the world, has been a bad witness, but he cannot continue that way, and so God is going to deal with him. To tell the truth, God will cripple him in order to get him. The Lord also disciplines us: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth . . ." ([Heb. 12:6](#)). That is His method. He disciplines in that way. Lot also did not look like he was a child of God -- but he was, for Peter says that Lot "vexed his righteous soul" (see [2Pet. 2:7-8](#)). But I tell you, Lot certainly was put through the fire. He escaped the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah, but the Lord put him through the fires of testing. This is Jacob's experience also. He got his college degree at the college of hard knocks. Uncle Laban was president and dean of the school. At graduation, this boy Jacob gave a pitiful valedictorian address. It took him twenty years to get his degree, and he certainly worked for it. Old Laban changed the requirements ten times. Every two years, Jacob had a new contract with Uncle Laban, and it was always to Jacob's disadvantage. This was the experience of this man.

We come now to this test in which God is going to have to deal with Jacob because he is going to represent God. God will deal with him and will move in on him in this thirty-

second chapter. At the beginning, I would like to write this verse of Scripture over this chapter: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" ([Isa. 40:29](#)). This is the experience of Jacob.

Crisis In The Life Of Jacob (32:1-23)

And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim [[Gen. 32:1-2](#)].

God is beginning to deal with Jacob directly in order to bring him into the place of fruit bearing and of real, vital service and witness for Him.

And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight [[Gen. 32:3-5](#)].

This fellow Jacob is still clever, isn't he? He just cannot let go, even after his experience with Laban. He is returning back to the land, and he remembers the last time he saw Esau twenty years ago, when Esau was breathing out threatenings against him. Notice that Jacob sends servants and instructs them, saying, "When you get to Esau my brother, say to him, 'My lord Esau.' " Of all things! And then he has them refer to himself as "Thy servant Jacob." That's not the way Jacob had spoken before. He had manipulated for the birthright and had stolen the blessing. He had been a rascal, but now his talk is different. I guess he had learned a few things from Uncle Laban. "My lord Esau . . . thy servant Jacob."

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him [[Gen. 32:6](#)].

This message absolutely frightened poor Jacob because he didn't know what all that meant. Esau did not indicate his intentions to the servants at all. I suppose that Jacob quizzed them rather thoroughly and said, "Did you detect any note of animosity or bitterness or hatred toward me?" And I suppose that one of the servants said, "No, he seemed to be glad to get the information that you were coming to meet him, and now he's coming to meet you." But the fact that Esau appeared glad was no comfort to Jacob. It could mean that Esau would be glad for the opportunity of getting revenge. Anyway, poor Jacob is upset.

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;

And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape [[Gen. 32:7-8](#)].

Jacob is in a bad way, he thinks. With this brother of his coming to him, he divides up his group. He is being clever. He reasons that if his brother strikes one group, then the other one can escape.

Notice what Jacob does now. He appeals to God in his distress:

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands [[Gen. 32:9-10](#)].

This man now appeals to God and cries out to Him on the basis that He is the God of his father Abraham and the God of his father Isaac. I begin now to detect a little change in Jacob's life. This is the first time I have ever heard him say, "I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies." For the first time, he is acknowledging that he might be a sinner in God's sight. Do you know that there are a great many "Christians" who do not acknowledge that they are sinners? For years I knew a man who was incensed that I would indicate that he was a sinner. He told me all that he had done and that he had been saved and now was not a sinner. My friend, he is a sinner. We are all sinners, saved by grace. As long as we are in this life, we have that old nature that isn't even fit to go to heaven. And do you know that God is not going to let it go to heaven? Vernon McGee cannot go there. That is the reason God had to give me a new nature; the old one wasn't even fit to repair. This fellow Jacob is beginning now to say that he is not worthy. When any man begins to move toward God on that basis, he will find that God will communicate with him.

Jacob makes this very interesting statement: "for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." He went over the Jordan with just his walking stick, his staff -- that's all he had. Now he is coming back, and he has become two companies. This is Jacob for you.

Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude [[Gen. 32:11-12](#)].

Jacob really cried out to God. That night was a very difficult night for him, and he didn't have any aspirins he could take.

And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;

Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,

Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls,
twenty she asses, and ten foals [[Gen. 32:13-15](#)].

Jacob is pretty generous with his stock now.

And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove
by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me,
and put a space betwixt drove and drove [[Gen. 32:16](#)].

This is Jacob's tactic. He will send out a drove, a very rich gift, for his brother, and when that first drove arrives, Esau will say, "What is this?" The servants will reply, "We are bringing you a gift from your brother Jacob." Esau will receive that gift and then ride on a little farther to meet another drove of the same size. He will ask the servants, "Where are you going?" They will say, "We're going to meet Esau with a gift from his brother Jacob." And he will say, "I am Esau." Believe me, by the time Esau gets down where Jacob and the family are, he will be softened.

Jacob has prayed to God and has reminded the Lord, "You told me to return to my country. You said You would protect me." But does he believe God? No. He goes right ahead and makes these arrangements, which reveals that he isn't trusting God at all. I am afraid that we are often in the same position. Many of us take our burdens to the Lord in prayer. We just spread them out before Him -- I do that. Then when we get through praying, we get right up and put each little burden right back on our back and start out again with them. We don't really believe Him, do we? We don't really trust Him as we should.

And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother
meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and
whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee?

Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present
sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us.

And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that
followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto
Esau, when ye find him.

And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For
he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me,
and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me
[[Gen. 32:17-20](#)].

Esau will be met by one drove after another like that. This is the plan that Jacob is working on.

So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night
in the company.

And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two
womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford
Jabbok.

And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over
that he had [[Gen. 32:21-23](#)].

This is the night of the great experience in Jacob's life. The land where he crossed the Brook Jabbok is very desolate. When I was there, I purposely got away from my group and took a walk across the bridge that is there today. The United States built a very lovely road through that area for the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan. There are several things in that area which you would not be able to see if there wasn't that good road, because it is quite a wilderness area. I took pictures of sheep that were drinking down at the Brook Jabbok. The crossing there is a very bleak place, right down between two hills, in that very mountainous and very rugged country. Here is where Jacob came that night. He is not a happy man, and he is filled with fear and doubts. You see, chickens are coming home to roost. He had mistreated Esau. God had never told him to get the birthright or the blessing in the way he did it. God would have gotten it for him. That night Jacob sends all that he has across the Brook Jabbok, but he stays on the other side so that, if his brother Esau comes, he might kill Jacob but spare the family. And so Jacob is left alone.

Wrestling At Peniel (32:24-26)

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day [[Gen. 32:24](#)].

There are several things I would like to get straight as we come to this wrestling match. I have heard it said that Jacob did the wrestling. Actually, Jacob didn't want to wrestle anybody. He has Uncle Laban in back of him who doesn't mean good at all, and he has his brother Esau ahead of him. Jacob is no match for either one. He is caught now between a rock and a hard place, and he doesn't know which way to turn. Do you think he wanted to take on a third opponent that night? I don't think so.

Years ago Time magazine, reporting in the sports section concerning the votes for the greatest wrestler, said that not a vote went to the most famous athlete in history, wrestling Jacob. Lo and behold, the magazine received a letter from someone who wrote asking them to tell something about this wrestler Jacob. The writer of the letter had never heard of him before! And evidently he had never read his Bible at all. Jacob is no wrestler -- let's make that very clear here at the beginning. That night he was alone because he wanted to be alone, and he wasn't looking for a fight.

This is the question: Who is this one who wrestled with Jacob that night? There has been a great deal of speculation about who it is, but I think He is none other than the preincarnate Christ. There is some evidence for this in the prophecy of Hosea: "Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt. The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us; Even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial" ([Hos. 12:1-5](#)). "The LORD is his memorial" -- or, "the Lord is His name." It was none other than Jehovah, the preincarnate Christ, who wrestled with Jacob that night.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him [[Gen. 32:25](#)].

Old Jacob is not going to give up easily; he is not that kind of man -- and he struggled against Him. Finally, this One who wrestled with him crippled him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me [[Gen. 32:26](#)].

What happens now? Jacob is just holding on; he's not wrestling. He is just holding on to this One. He found out that you do not get anywhere with God by struggling and resisting. The only way that you get anywhere with Him is by yielding and just holding on to Him. Abraham had learned that, and that is why he said amen to God. He believed God, and He counted it to him for righteousness. Abraham reached the end of his rope and put his arms around God. My friend, when you get in that condition, then you trust God. When you are willing to hold on, He is there ready to help you.

Jacob's Name Changed To Israel (32:27-32)

And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed [[Gen. 32:27-28](#)].

He is not Jacob anymore -- the one who is usurper, the trickster -- but Israel, "for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Now the new nature of Israel will be manifested in the life of this man.

And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.
And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved [[Gen. 32:29-30](#)].

Jacob had seen the Angel of the Lord, the preincarnate Christ.

And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank [[Gen. 32:31-32](#)].

God had to cripple Jacob in order to get him, but He got him. This man Jacob refused to give in at first -- that was typical of him. He knew a few holds, and he thought that after awhile he would be able to overcome. Finally, he found out he couldn't overcome, but he would not surrender. And so what did God do? Certainly, with His superior strength, in a moment God could have pinned down Jacob's shoulders -- but He wouldn't have pinned down his will. Jacob was like the little boy whose mama made him sit in a corner in his room. After awhile she heard a noise in there, and she called to him, "Willie, are you

sitting down?" He said, "Yes, I'm sitting down, but I'm standing up on the inside of me!" That is precisely what would have happened to Jacob. He would have been standing up on the inside of himself -- he wasn't ready to yield.

Notice how God deals with him. He touches the hollow of Jacob's thigh. Just a touch of the finger of God, and this man becomes helpless. But you see, God is not pinning down his shoulders. Now Jacob holds on to Him. The Man says, "Let Me go," and Jacob says, "No, I want Your blessing." He's clinging to God now. The struggling and striving are over, and from here on Jacob is going to manifest a spiritual nature, dependence upon God. You will not find the change happening in a moment's notice. Psychologists tell us that certain synaptic connections are set up in our nervous systems so that we do things by habit. We are creatures of habit. This man will lapse back into his old ways many times, but we begin to see something different in him now. Before we are through with him, we will find that he is a real man of God.

First, we saw him at his home and then in the land of Haran where he was a man of the flesh. Here at Peniel, at the Brook Jabbok, we find him fighting. After this, and all the way through down into Egypt, we see him as a man of faith. First a man of the flesh, then a man who is fighting and struggling, and finally a man of faith.

In the New Testament another young man, a son of Jacob by the name of Saul of Tarsus, tells us his struggle in chapter 7 of Romans. There were three periods in his life. When he was converted, he thought he could live the Christian life. That's where I made my mistake also. When I became a Christian, I frankly thought I could live the Christian life. After all, Vernon McGee didn't need any help. I thought it was easy, but I didn't do it, and that was the hard part. That is where Paul had his problem: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" ([Rom. 7:19](#)).

Paul found out that not only was there no good in the old nature, but there also was no strength or power in the new nature. Finally we hear him crying out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" ([Rom. 7:24](#)). Then something happened, and in [verse 25](#) he says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . ." It is through Him that you will have to do all your thanking, because that is where your help is going to come -- through Him. ". . . So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" ([Rom. 7:25](#)). That is the way that it is with all of us. We have that old nature, and it cannot do anything that will please God. In fact, Paul went on to say that it was against God.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" ([Rom. 8:7-8](#)). We cannot please God in the flesh. Finally, Paul found victory by yielding to the Spirit of God. What the law could not do, the Spirit now is able to do in our lives. How does one do it? It is not until you and I yield to Him that we can please Him. Yield means that it is an act of the will of a regenerated person submitting himself to the will of God. And that is exactly what Jacob did. Jacob won, but he got the victory, not by fighting and struggling, but by yielding. What a picture we have here in him, and we are told that all these things happened unto them as examples to us (see [1Cor. 10:11](#)).

Chapter 33

THEME: Jacob meets Esau; Jacob journeys to Shalem

In the previous chapter we saw the high point in the life of Jacob, which was his encounter with God. On that night "a man" wrestled with him, and the "man," not Jacob, did the wrestling. Jacob was not looking for another fight. He has Uncle Laban in back of him and Brother Esau ahead of him, and the last time he saw both of them they were breathing out threatenings against him. This man Jacob is not in a position to take on someone else. Therefore, the "man" took the initiative; He was the aggressor. He was, as we have seen, the preincarnate Christ. Jacob resisted Him until the touch of God crippled him. Then, recognizing at last who He was, Jacob clung to Him until He blessed him. From this point on we will begin to see a change in Jacob. As we follow his life in the chapter before us, we will think that we have met a new man. To tell the truth, he is a new man.

Jacob Meets Esau (33:1-16)

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids [[Gen. 33:1](#)].

Jacob wants to spare his family; so he separates them from the others.

And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother [[Gen. 33:2-3](#)].

I would love to have a picture of Jacob meeting his brother Esau! I suppose that while he was a mile away from him, he started bowing. He is coming with his hat in his hand because Esau has four hundred men with him, and Jacob doesn't know if he is coming as friend or foe.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept [[Gen. 33:4](#)].

Well, they are twins, they are brothers. Let bygones be bygones. It looks as if God has certainly touched Esau's heart because he had sworn vengeance that he would kill Jacob.

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves [[Gen. 33:5-7](#)].

Jacob introduces his family to his brother.

And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord [[Gen. 33:8](#)].

Apparently Jacob believes for a moment that his strategy of approaching his brother has worked. But it wasn't necessary. Listen to Esau -- what a change!

And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself [[Gen. 33:9](#)].

Esau is saying, "You didn't need to send that to me. I have plenty already."

And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it [[Gen. 33:10-11](#)].

This is almost a humorous scene. Up to this time, each was trying to get something from the other. This was especially true of Jacob. Now we find Jacob in a new role altogether. Here he is insisting that his brother take a gift. Esau says, "You don't have to give it to me. I have plenty." But Jacob insists that he accept it. Believe me, something has happened to Jacob!

He reminds me of Zacchaeus in the New Testament. When our Lord called him down and went with him into his house, something happened to Zacchaeus. He wasn't the same man that climbed up into the tree. He said he would no longer be the tax collector who had been stealing from people and had been dishonest. He wanted to return, not only anything that he had taken in a wrong way, but he wanted to restore it fourfold. What a change had taken place! You could certainly tell which house Jesus had visited.

Certainly there is a change that has taken place in Jacob. Before he had traded a bowl of stew to get a birthright; now he is willing to give flocks and herds to his brother for nothing! In fact, Jacob insists that he take them. Esau finally accepted the gift. In that day and in that land if one refused to take a gift which was urged upon him, it was considered an insult. Therefore, Esau takes the gift.

And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee [[Gen. 33:12](#)].

Esau is saying, "Now as you return to the land, let me go before you, show you the way, and be a protection for you."

And he said unto him. My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die [[Gen. 33:13](#)].

Jacob says, "I'm moving my family, and we have little ones, also we have young among the flocks and herds. We can't go very fast. You, of course, with that army of four hundred will probably want to move much faster; so you go ahead."

Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir [[Gen. 33:14](#)].

Jacob says, "I can't keep up with you, Brother Esau. I'll just have to set my own pace. You go on ahead."

And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord.

So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir [[Gen. 33:15-16](#)].

Esau lived in southern Canaan in Seir, the "land of Edom," at this time. After their father's death, he moved to Mount Seir, which God subsequently gave to Esau for a possession ([Deut. 2:5](#)).

Jacob Journeys To Shalem (33:17-20)

And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth [[Gen. 33:17](#)].

Now let us not pass by so quickly and easily here that we do not pay attention to what has happened. A great change has come over this man Jacob. You see, all of Jacob's clever scheming to present a gift to his brother Esau has just come to naught. God had prepared the heart of Laban not to harm Jacob, and God had prepared the heart of Esau to receive Jacob. Now he has peace on both fronts. Esau did not want the gift of Jacob because Esau himself had an abundance. When Jacob insisted, he took the gift out of courtesy. Both these brothers seem to be generous and genuine in their reconciliation. We have no reason to doubt it. Since Esau is now prosperous, and since he attached no particular value to his birthright anyway, there is no reason why he should not be reconciled to his twin brother.

Now the sunshine is beginning to fall on Jacob's life. Laban is appeased and Esau is reconciled. God had arranged all of this for him. Had Jacob been left to his own cupidity and his own cleverness, he would have come to his death in a violent manner. Before too long Jacob is going to look back over his life, and when he does, he is going to see the hand of God in his life, and he is going to give God the glory. However, the evil that he has sown is yet to bring forth a full harvest. Trouble is in the offing for this man. It is there waiting for him.

Esau rides off to Seir, and we bid good-bye to him for the time being. He will be back, however, for the funeral of his father Isaac, as we will see in chapter 35.

And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city.

And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money [[Gen. 33:18-19](#)].

Jacob is sometimes criticized because he stopped here at Succoth and at Shalem and did not proceed on to Bethel. Actually, we ought not to expect too much of Jacob at this time. He's been crippled, and he is just learning to walk with his spiritual legs.

And he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel [[Gen. 33:20](#)].

Jacob builds an altar here, just as his grandfather Abraham was accustomed to building altars wherever he went. The fine feature is that Jacob identifies his new name with the name of God. He calls it El-elohe-Israel which means, "God, the God of Israel." This indicates real growth in a man who is just learning to walk. Let's put it like this. This man is on the way to Bethel, but he hasn't arrived there yet. First he journeys to Succoth.

Chapter 34

THEME: Dinah defiled by Shechem; Simeon and Levi slay the men of Hamor

Frankly, Jacob made a mistake by stopping in Shalem, for there is going to be a scandal at this point in the family of this man. Dinah, the daughter of Jacob by Leah, is defiled by Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite. Then Simeon and Levi, Dinah's full brothers, avenge this act by slaying all the inhabitants of the city of Hamor. This cannot be justified, and it is a dark blot on the family of Jacob. It reveals the fact that Jacob did not get away too soon when he left his Uncle Laban down in the land of Haran. We need to see that God was right in getting him away from that environment.

There are two things that God spends a great deal of time with in Genesis. First of all, there is heredity. God is very much concerned that a believer marry a believer and that a believer not marry an unbeliever. That is important for the sake of heredity. The second thing of concern is the environment of the individual. We see this especially in the life of Jacob. He has a big family. Not only were there twelve sons, but there were also daughters. We are given the record of only this one daughter because she features in this very sad chapter.

There is something else for us to note that is important to the understanding of Genesis, and that is that there is trouble in the families. Have you noticed that? There was strife and trouble in the family of Abraham. There was strife and trouble in the family of Isaac. Esau was Isaac's favorite, and Rebekah's favorite was her son Jacob -- and that caused a great deal of trouble in the family. Now we will see that there was a great deal of trouble in the family of Jacob.

Jacob stops and stays in Shalem for awhile, and it is going to cause a great deal of sorrow to him. Very frankly, chapter 34 is a sad, sordid chapter, and this must have been a heartbreak to old Jacob at this time. Jacob (or Israel, as we should call him) has built an altar, and he is now giving a testimony to the living and true God. There is a change in his life, but it is a slow growth, a development. This should be a lesson to us today: Don't expect that, as a Christian, you are going to become full grown overnight. God adopts us

as full-grown sons into the family where we are able to understand the divine truth because the Holy Spirit is our Teacher. But our spiritual growth and our progress are very slow. We may learn truths in the Bible, but we will find that in our lives we are very much like Simon Peter, stumbling here and falling down there. Thank God that Simon Peter kept getting up and brushing himself off, and there came a day when he had a very close walk with the Lord. In fact, he walked to a cross even as our Lord did. You and I need to recognize that in our own lives the growth is slow, and therefore the growth in others will also be slow. Sometimes parents of converted children expect too much of them. Let's not expect too much of other folk, but let's also expect a great deal of ourselves.

There are three chapters in the Book of Genesis that are not pretty at all, and they all concern the children of Leah, the elder daughter of Laban who was given to Jacob. I believe that this gives evidence of the fact that God does not approve of plurality of marriages. The very fact that it was forced on Jacob to a certain extent did not make it right, by any means -- Jacob at least went along with it. We find in this section that the children of Leah are all involved in sin. She had four boys. In this chapter it is Simeon and Levi. In chapter 35 we come to another of the sons, Reuben, the firstborn. In chapter 38 it will be Judah. Every one of Leah's sons turned out rather badly, and there was flagrant sin in their lives.

We have already noted that there was a great deal of strife in all of these families, but now another element has entered in. There is sordidness and a shoddiness that has seeped into the family of Jacob that was not in the family of Abraham or of Isaac. They had a great deal of difficulty and many problems, but nothing like we see in Jacob's family. Again, God wanted to get this man Jacob and his family out from the home of Laban, out from that atmosphere, because the very atmosphere gave the background for these awful sins that are mentioned here.

Dinah Defiled By Shechem (34:1-24)

Jacob has stopped here at Shalem and has bought himself a nice little place out in the suburban area of town. He is attempting, as it were, to orient himself to the culture of that day. Well, it wasn't a good place, and God wants to separate this man from this area also. And believe me, after you read this chapter you will come to the conclusion that God had better separate him from it!

And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land [[Gen. 34:1](#)].

Dinah went visiting in this town of Shalem.

And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her [[Gen. 34:2](#)].

Let me put it in the language of the news media today: He raped her. If they can say it in print and on radio and television, certainly this poor preacher can say it. Sin needs to be spelled out. There was a time when sin was sin, but now they've taken the "s" off of it, and you're in the "in" group if you're a sinner. But that's not the way God spells sin. He

still spells it S-I-N. And you will notice that "I" is right in the middle of the word -- that's where all of us are.

And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel.

And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife [[Gen. 34:3-4](#)].

The very interesting thing is that the boy Shechem was apparently in love with the girl and really wanted to marry her.

And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.

And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him.

And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done [[Gen. 34:5-7](#)].

We certainly agree that it should not have been done, but it had been, and now the fellow wants to marry her. When Jacob heard it, he waited for his boys to come in, and they had a war counsel. I am of the opinion that Jacob probably should not have made as much of it as he did. When Hamor, the father of Shechem, came out to him, it is obvious that he wanted to get the girl for his son's wife. Jacob probably should have yielded to that, because that was, shall I say, the best way out at the time. Certainly, the way it was handled was not the best by any means, and God did not approve of it.

And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife.

And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you [[Gen. 34:8-9](#)].

Although intermarriage would have been wrong, it seems that Dinah should have been given to Shechem because that would have prevented a worse sin. This, of course, is hindsight, and "Monday morning quarterbacks" are not always right.

And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein.

And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give.

Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife [[Gen. 34:10-12](#)].

All of this reveals that Jacob is going to have to move on. This is no place for him, mixing with these people in this land.

And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister [[Gen. 34:13](#)].

I feel that Jacob should certainly have taken the leadership in his family. First of all, he should have prevented his sons from deceiving Shechem and Hamor.

And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us [[Gen. 34:14](#)].

The thing that disturbs me about this incident is that the real reproach -- the sin of rape -- is ignored, and they make the reproach on the basis of the rule which God had given them regarding intermarriage with the uncircumcised.

But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised;

Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone [[Gen. 34:15-17](#)].

The thing that Jacob's sons ask them to do is to go through the ritual of circumcision.

This ought to be a warning today to a great many people. I recall one couple who came to me for counseling and asked me to perform their marriage ceremony. I would not unite them in marriage because he was not a Christian, and she claimed that she would not marry him unless he became a Christian. I talked with him, and he said he would accept Christ. We had prayer, and then I asked him, "What have you really done?" I have never heard such hemming and hawing and beating around the bush as this boy did. Very frankly, I said right in front of him, "Young lady, I'll not perform the ceremony. I don't think the young man is converted." They felt that I was being very harsh, and they went down the street and got another preacher to perform the ceremony. After they were married, she tried to get him to go to church. Of course, he had a good reason for not coming to hear me preach because I'd been so cruel to him, but then she agreed to go to another church, and they went two or three times. Finally, he just said to her point-blank, "Really, I'm not a Christian." Just to go through the ceremony of joining the church and even of saying you trust Christ doesn't mean you have. I find that faith doesn't seem to mean very much to a great many people today. They think it is enough just to nod your head. It is a tremendous experience, my friend, to trust Christ as your Savior. There's nothing quite like it, nothing to compare to it in this world. When you trust Christ as Savior, it does something for you. It didn't do anything for that boy.

Mark Twain had the same experience. He was not a Christian, and he was in love with a very beautiful, wonderful Christian girl. She would not marry him until he became a Christian. He professed to have accepted Christ as his Savior, and they started out their marriage that way. Well, Mark Twain became very famous, and he was entertained by many famous people in the world. One day when he came back to his home in Missouri

and she wanted to go to church, he said, "Look, I can't keep up the front any longer. You go on to church. I know now that I'm not a Christian." May I say that made a very unhappy home, and it absolutely spoiled the life of this lovely Christian girl.

Here the sons of Jacob are saying, "If you'll go through the rite of circumcision, it will make everything all right." A great many people think that if you join the church, nod your head, and are able to use the right vocabulary and quote the right verse, that means you are a Christian. My friend, that does not mean you are a Christian. If you have trusted in Christ, something has happened, and you are a different person.

And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son.

And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father [[Gen. 34:18-19](#)].

I agree that this boy is doing the honorable thing at this point.

And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying,

These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters.

Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised.

Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us [[Gen. 34:20-23](#)].

In other words, through intermarriage these men expected to eventually own everything that Jacob had.

And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city [[Gen. 34:24](#)].

Performing the rite of circumcision on unbelievers was as phony as it could be. It is like joining a church when you are unconverted.

Simeon And Levi Slay The Men Of Hamor (34:25-31)

And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males [[Gen. 34:25](#)].

This was real trickery. Simeon and Levi were Dinah's full brothers, and they wanted to get revenge. In their revenge, they go too far. Neither the rape nor the fact that Hamor intended to dispossess Jacob and his sons of the great wealth which Jacob had accumulated in Haran can in any way justify the brutal act of Simeon and Levi, but it

does reveal the impossible situation of dealing with the inhabitants of that land. The thing they have done is a very terrible thing.

And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.

The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister [[Gen. 34:26-27](#)].

The other sons joined in on this. This reveals greed in the family of Jacob that is not right and which they had learned in the home of Laban.

They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field,

And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house [[Gen. 34:28-30](#)].

Notice something that is obviously wrong here in the life of Jacob. Jacob rebukes Simeon and Levi for giving him a bad name, but he doesn't rebuke them for the sin that they have committed. We sometimes get a wrong perspective of sin and of our actions. We think only of the effect that it is going to have. There are many men and women in our churches who will not take a stand on certain issues. Why? Well, the little crowd they run with may not accept them. They are with a little clique, and they don't dare stand for anything that the little clique wouldn't stand for. It is never a question of whether it is right or wrong; it's a question of whether it ingratiates them to the crowd. God have mercy on Christians who shape their lives by those who are around them and who are constantly looking for the effect their conduct is going to have on others. They do not look on whether this is the right thing or the Christian thing or whether as a child of God this is something they should or should not do. This is the reason our churches are filled with those who compromise, and it is little wonder that we have so many frustrated, unhappy Christians today. It is a wonderful thing to stand for the truth, and when you stand for it, then you don't have to compromise. How wonderful it is when we will do that. Poor old Jacob is growing, but he hasn't grown that far.

Then these boys, of course, attempt to defend themselves:

And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot? [[Gen. 34:31](#)].

That's a good question. I would say that if they wanted to take the judgment into their own hands, they first of all should have heard this boy out and let him marry their sister. It would have been the best thing to do under the circumstances, but it is not the right thing, by any means. Certainly that would have been better than to go to the extreme of murdering the inhabitants of that land. There is no excuse that can be offered, and I have no defense to offer for them at all. They should not have done the thing that they did, but

we must understand that they were not living in the light of [Romans 12:19-21](#) which says: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." For a Christian today [Romans 12](#) is the policy that he should follow. The very minute we attempt to take revenge or get vengeance, it means that we are no longer walking by faith. We are saying that we cannot trust God to work it out. However, I am not sure that you could bring Jacob -- and certainly not his sons -- up to such a spiritual level at that particular time. But you cannot justify this terrible deed which they have committed. You can well understand that they acted because of their feeling for their sister and the shame which had been brought upon the family. Jacob was beginning to see that a whole lot of chickens -- not just a few -- were coming home to roost.

Chapter 35

THEME: Jacob returns to Bethel; God renews the covenant; Rachel dies at the birth of Benjamin; death of Isaac

After the study in chapter 34, you may have come to the conclusion that I made a blunder when I said that Jacob's life changed at Peniel. Actually, we did not see too much change in what took place in the thirty-fourth chapter. That is quite true, but there was a change that took place. I hesitate to call Jacob's experience at Peniel a crisis experience because I am afraid that this matter of a crisis experience has been overdrawn by a great many. There are some folk who feel that if you don't have a second experience, you just haven't had anything. The fact of the matter is that that's not true. Some have a wonderful crisis experience, and I'm sure that many of us can turn back to that in our lives. But there are those who cannot or do not and have never mentioned it as being something very important in their lives. But when Jacob came to Peniel, a tremendous thing happened to him. All the way from the beginning of the life of Jacob until Peniel, his life was characterized by the rise of self, the assertion of the flesh -- that's Jacob and nothing but that. What really happened at Peniel was the fall of self. He went down like a deflated tire. He had been pumped up like a balloon, and he went down to practically nothing. But actually, chapter 34 evidences that he was not yet walking by faith.

As soon as Esau had turned his back and started home, Jacob took his family down to Shalem. It is a tragic move. Jacob was still depending upon his own cleverness. Dinah was raped, and Simeon and Levi, her full brothers, went into the city of Shalem to the prince who was responsible. Although he wanted to marry her, they murdered him, and the sons of Jacob conducted a slaughter that would make a gang shooting in Chicago look pretty tame. When they came home, Jacob said, "You have made my name to smell among the people of my land."

Many expositors say that it was a tragic thing for Jacob to stop in Shalem, and I must say that I have to go along with that partially. But I have one question to ask: Was Jacob ready for Bethel? Was he ready for the experiences that God was going to give him? No, I think that the tragic things that took place in chapter 34 were the result of a man who had been walking in the energy of the flesh. There had been a deflation of self, but there

was no discernible faith in God. Because he did not have faith to go on to Bethel, he stopped at Shalem. These tragic things which took place in his life reveal that this man was not a leader in his own family. He was not taking the proper place that he should have. He was no spiritual giant, by any means. And to have those eleven boys to herd was really a job for which this man Jacob was not prepared. After this tragic event, Jacob now is beginning to see the hand of God in his life, and now he makes the decision that he probably should have made beforehand.

Jacob Returns To Bethel (35:1-8)

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother [[Gen. 35:1](#)].

Now God is calling this man back to Bethel. After this sad experience, he is prepared to go. You see, he didn't have faith to move out before, but Jacob now begins to take the spiritual leadership in his home.

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments [[Gen. 35:2](#)].

There are several things that Jacob tells his household to do. First of all, they are to "put away the strange gods that are among you." We are almost shocked at this. You will recall that when Jacob fled with Rachel and Leah, Rachel slipped out with the family gods. Apparently, she had sat on them while riding the camel -- she just crawled on top of the luggage that was on the camel's back and sat down because these little images were underneath. Jacob did not know at the time that she had taken them. He was very honest when he told Laban that the images were not in his entourage at all. That may have been one of the few times he was truthful with Laban. He really had not known they were there.

When they were discovered, I think that we would all assume that Jacob would get rid of them because he knew of the living and true God. In fact, he had had a personal encounter with Him. But he didn't get rid of the images, and now we find that his entire family is worshiping these strange gods. For the first time, Jacob is the one to take the spiritual leadership, and he says, "Let's get rid of these false gods, these strange gods." The first thing they have to do is to put away that which is wrong.

There are too many folk who six days a week are serving some other god, and on Sunday they try to serve the Lord. Many Christians, even fundamental believers, have their strange gods, and then they wonder why their service in church on Sunday is not a thrilling experience. My friend, you are going to have to put away your strange gods. I don't know what yours might be. It could be covetousness. There is many a good fundamental businessman who is out after every dollar he can get. He gives more devotion to getting the dollar than he does to serving the Lord on Sunday. And then he wonders what is wrong with his spiritual life. If you are going to come back to Bethel where you met God at the beginning, then, my friend, you must put away those things that are wrong.

Then Jacob says, "Be clean." For the believer, that means confession of sins. You have to deal with sin in your life. You cannot come to church on Sunday and dismiss the way you have lived during the week that has just passed. After all, you take a physical bath and use a deodorant before you come to church, and yet there is spiritual body odor in our churches because there is no confession of sin, no cleansing. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" ([1John 1:9](#)). There must be the confession. He will forgive, but we must confess.

"And change your garments." In other words, get rid of the old garments. In Scripture "garments" speak of habits. We speak of an equestrian wearing a riding habit or of a football player wearing a uniform -- which is his habit. In like manner, the child of God should dress in a way to mirror who he is and to whom he belongs. Do you wear the habits of the Lord? Can you be detected in business or in school or in the neighborhood as being a little different in your life? You are wearing a habit. The day that Jacob went back to Bethel, he started living for God. Up to then, I don't think he was. Now he says, "Let's go back to Bethel" -- that's the thing that we must do.

And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went [[Gen. 35:3](#)].

Abraham and Isaac had made altars, and now Jacob will make an altar -- thank God for that. He will now have a witness for God.

"Who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." The thing that Jacob remembered is that when he was running away from home as a young man, homesick and lonesome, he had come to Bethel, and God had been faithful to him. God had said, "I will be faithful to you." The years had gone by, and God certainly had been faithful to him. Now God says, "You've got to go back to Bethel. You have to go back to where you started. You have to begin there."

We need to recognize that the years we spend in living a shoddy, shabby Christian life are a waste of time, absolutely a waste of time. God called the children of Israel to get out of Egypt and into the land of promise. God appeared to them and told them to go into the land, but they didn't go in. Forty years they wandered around, and then God appeared to Joshua and said, "Go into the land." He picked up right where He had left off. They had wasted forty years. How many people are wasting their lives as Christians? My, the tremendous spiritual lessons that are here for us! I don't know about you, but some of us are just like Jacob, and that's the reason this is so applicable to us today. Thank God that He says He is the God of Jacob. I love that! If He'll be the God of Jacob, He'll be the God of J. Vernon McGee also -- that's wonderful! This chapter is a great encouragement to us.

Notice that Jacob is assuming authority in his home.

And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem [[Gen. 35:4](#)].

Let me pause to say that earrings were associated with worship in that day -- there is a great deal said in Scripture about that. The earrings identified them as idolaters, and so they are going to get rid of them.

"Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem." Jacob got rid of them. They're not stored away -- they're buried. They must be put away because it is now going to be a new life.

And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Beth-el, he and all the people that were with him [[Gen. 35:5-6](#)].

This place was called Luz before Jacob changed the name to Bethel, and the people in that day knew it as Luz, not as Bethel. We know it today as Bethel.

And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother [[Gen. 35:7](#)].

Beth-el, meaning "the house of God," was the name that Jacob had given to it before. Now he called it El-Beth-el, which means "God of the house of God." This reveals spiritual growth in Jacob's life.

Now here is a very interesting sidelight:

But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth [[Gen. 35:8](#)].

Since Deborah was with Jacob at this time, we assume that Rebekah had already died, and Scripture does not tell us when her death took place. Poor Jacob never saw his mother again. That part is not as tragic as the fact that she never saw him again -- she had just sent him away for a little while, you know. The nurse apparently had brought a message of Rebekah's death and had come to stay with Jacob -- and now she dies.

God Renews The Covenant (35:9-15)

And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him [[Gen. 35:9](#)].

All those years God had been trying to deal with Jacob. Now he picks up right where He had met him when he came to Bethel as a young man. Those years he spent down there with Uncle Laban, in many ways, were wasted years.

And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins [[Gen. 35:10-11](#)].

"I am God Almighty." Remember that that is what He had told Abraham.

And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it,
and to thy seed after thee will I give the land [[Gen. 35:12](#)].

The Lord considers that pretty important property, by the way. This now is the third time He has promised them the land -- first to Abraham, then to Isaac, and now to Jacob. The Lord had to tell each one of these men about it two or three times; in fact, He told Abraham many times.

And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him,
even a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering thereon, and
he poured oil thereon.

And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him,
Beth-el [[Gen. 35:13-15](#)].

Here is the first mention of a drink offering. In the Book of Leviticus, five offerings are given, but not a drink offering. In fact, no instruction is given about it at all, but it is mentioned. Evidently this is one of the oldest offerings, and it has a very wonderful meaning to the believer today. The drink offering was just poured on the other offerings, and it went up in the steam. Paul told the Philippians that that is the way he wanted his life to be -- just poured out like a drink offering.

Rachel Dies At The Birth Of Benjamin (35:16-21)

And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to
come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour
[[Gen. 35:16](#)].

Rachel had one son Joseph, but now she has a second son.

And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife
said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.

And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died)
that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him
Benjamin [[Gen. 35:17-18](#)].

What a wonderful thing this is -- not the death of Rachel, but the way this took place. She says, "Call him 'son of my sorrow,' " but Jacob looked down at him and said, "I've lost my lovely Rachel, and this little fellow looks like her, so I'll just call him Benjamin, 'son of my right hand.' " Jacob was partial to the sons of Rachel.

Jacob's love for Rachel was perhaps the only fine thing in his life during those years in Padan-aram when there was so much evidence of the flesh and of self-seeking. He loved Rachel -- there is no question about that. He was totally devoted to her. He was willing to do almost anything for her, such as permitting her to keep the images she had taken from her father. I don't think that Leah would have gotten by with it -- or anyone else for that matter. But he was indulgent with Rachel. She had given Jacob his son Joseph, and now

she gives birth to Benjamin. And it was at the birth of her second son that she died. His life meant her death. It was a great heartbreak to Jacob.

The other ten boys were no joy to him at all. God reminded him, I think, every day for twenty-four hours of the day that it was sinful to have more than one wife. He didn't need all of them. However, God will overrule, of course. (And He overrules in your life and mine. We can thank Him for that!) But the facts reveal that God did not approve of this plural marriage. This is especially obvious in the treatment which Joseph received from his half-brothers.

Jacob loved Joseph and Benjamin and, very frankly, the other boys were jealous of that. He should not have shown such partiality to Joseph because he had experienced the results of partiality in his own home -- he had been the one whom his father had more or less pushed aside. He knew the trouble it had caused. Although I don't try to defend Jacob, we can sympathize with him. He had lost his lovely Rachel, but he had Benjamin. While it was true that the boy was the son of Rachel's sorrow, Jacob could not call him Benoni. He was not the reason of his sorrow; he was the son of his right hand, his walking stick, his staff, the one he would lean on in his old age. It is important to recognize this because it will help us understand the great sorrow Jacob will go through later on. All of it will have its roots in Jacob's sin. God does not approve of the wrong in our lives, my friend. We think we can get by with it, but we will not get by with it -- anymore than Jacob got by with it.

And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem [[Gen. 35:19](#)].

She is buried there today. I have several pictures that I have taken of her tomb that is there.

And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day [[Gen. 35:20](#)].

That is, it was there until the time Moses wrote this, but it is also there to this very day.

And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar [[Gen. 35:21](#)].

In [verses 22-26](#) we have a listing of the sons of Jacob by his different wives. Actually, Joseph and Benjamin were the two boys that were outstanding. The others just didn't turn out well. Again, this proves the fact that God does not bless a plurality of wives. The family of Jacob ought to illustrate that fact to us. Although Uncle Laban was responsible, of course, Jacob went along with it.

Death Of Isaac (35:29)

And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him [[Gen. 35:29](#)].

I suspect that the death of their father Isaac was the only occasion which brought these two boys together in the years following Jacob's return to the land.

Have you noticed that this chapter is made prominent by death? First there is the death of Deborah, the maid of Rebekah. In this there is the suggestion of the death of Rebekah herself. Then there is the death of lovely Rachel. Finally, the chapter closes with the death of Isaac.

Chapter 36

THEME: Esau moves from Canaan to Mount Seir

This chapter deals entirely with the family of Esau which became the nation of Edom. Although it may not be too interesting for the average reader, it is a marvelous study for one who wants to follow through on these names and the peoples who came from them. You will find that some of the names mentioned here are names that one hears out on that great Arabian desert today. Omar, the tentmaker, belongs out there, as do Teman and Zepho and Kenaz and Korah. Well, here is the family of Esau, and they are still located out in that area.

The family of Esau settled in Edom, which is right south and east of the Dead Sea. It is a mountainous area, and the capital of Edom, the rock-hewn city of Petra, stands there today. Prophecy in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Obadiah concerning Edom has been remarkably fulfilled.

The nation of Edom came from Esau. Three times in this chapter it is made very clear that Esau is the father of Edom -- in fact, the names are synonymous (notice [verse 8](#), for example). Then what is the difference between Esau and Edom? Well, when we first met Esau, we saw him as a boy in the family of Isaac. He was the outdoor, rugged type, a fine-looking athletic boy, by the way. Outwardly, he looked attractive, but if there ever was a man of the flesh, Esau was that man.

Years ago a Christian girl talked to me about a fine-looking young man whom she had met. To tell the truth, they were both fine-looking young people. She had been born in China. Her father was in the oil business and had been made very wealthy. She met this young man who was a bank clerk, a very poor boy. I had been a bank clerk when I was a young fellow, and I knew that a lot of bank clerks look around for a good marriage. They notice the daughters of customers who have money in the bank. So this boy had met the girl. He was a handsome brute, fine-looking, the rugged type. To me he looked like Esau. She was a lovely Christian girl who had been led to the Lord by a missionary while in China. She insisted on marrying this young man, hoping that he would come to the Lord. I had talked with him and knew he had no notion of coming to the Lord, but he wanted to marry that girl. She was beautiful and she had money -- and he was a man of flesh. I told them I could not perform the ceremony. She was quite provoked with me, but later on she came back to tell me that she was divorced. She told me she had never known a person so given over to the things that were secular and carnal and of the flesh. She said she never dreamed there could be a person who would never in his entire life have a high, noble, spiritual, wonderful thought. She said he was as crude as one could possibly be. On the surface he gave a good impression, and he had been well mannered and chivalrous when they were courting, but underneath the facade he was crude and rude. Well, that is Esau, also. If you had been an attractive young lady in Esau's day and had seen him there in his

family, the chances are that you would have been glad to date him. He was an attractive young man, but he was a man of the flesh.

Perhaps someone will want to argue with God about His choice of Jacob over Esau. Esau looked so good on the outside. Could God have made a mistake? Well, over in the little prophecy of Obadiah we see Esau unveiled. One little Esau has become about one hundred thousand Edomites. Each one of them is a little Esau. Now take a look at the nation and you will see what came from Esau. It is like putting Esau under a microscope; he is greatly enlarged. What do we see? We see a nation filled with pride. God said to Edom: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD" ([Obad. 1:3-4](#)). The pride of their heart was a declaration of independence, a soul that says it can live without God and does not have a need for God. That is Esau.

In the last book of the Old Testament God says, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." God never said that until over one thousand years after these men lived, but God knew the heart of Esau at the beginning. After they worked their way out in history, it is obvious to us all that God was accurate.

Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom [[Gen. 36:1](#)].

Again we are told that Esau is Edom.

Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

And Bashemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth [[Gen. 36:2-3](#)].

Esau, you recall, had married two Canaanite women and also an Ishmaelite woman.

And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob.

For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle [[Gen. 36:6-7](#)].

Remember that Abraham and Lot had had that same problem. There was not enough grazing land for them. Each one had too many cattle. They had separated and now Esau leaves the Promised Land, leaves it on his own, due to economic circumstances.

Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom [[Gen. 36:8](#)].

Now Esau moves from "the land of Seir" in Canaan, where he lived when Jacob returned from Padan-aram ([Gen 32:3](#)), to Mount Seir, which I have already described.

And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these were the sons of Adah Esau's wife [[Gen. 36:12](#)].

This is the beginning of the Amalekites. Down through the centuries those tribes which were there in the desert pushed out in many directions. Many of them pushed across North Africa. All the Arab tribes came from Abraham -- through Hagar, the Egyptian, and through Keturah, whom he married after the death of Sarah. And there has been intermarriage between the tribes. They belong to the same family that Israelites belong to.

In the Mideast I met an Arab who expressed hostility to a statement I had made about the nation Israel in a message I had given to our tour group. Although he was a Christian Arab, he told me how he hated the nation Israel. I said to him, "But he is your brother." Believe me, that did antagonize him! He said, "I have no relationship with him at all." I insisted that he did. I said, "You are both Semitic people. You are a Semite as much as they are." Well, he had to admit that was true.

So this chapter is important as it shows these relationships. The Spirit of God uses a great deal of printer's ink to tell us about this.

We find some humor in this chapter, too.

These were dukes of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn son of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz [[Gen. 36:15](#)].

Where in the world did they get these dukes? Well, here is the beginning of nobility -- they just assumed these titles. Each one of them became a duke. It is not just a nickname - - they mean business by it. The beginning of nobility is in the family of Esau.

These are the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these are their dukes [[Gen. 36:19](#)].

They have dukes in the family now. A great many people in my country can trace their ancestry back to royalty. It makes me wonder if anybody who came from Europe were folk who worked in vineyards, made pottery, and ran shoe shops. Everybody seems to have come from royalty. Well, Esau turned out quite a few of them. In fact, he went further than producing dukes --

And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel [[Gen. 36:31](#)].

This business of having kings was not God's plan for His people. But this was the lifestyle of Edom. They had dukes and kings over them. If you had belonged to the family of Esau, you would have needed a title, because that is the type of folk they were. It is interesting to note that the people of Esau had kings long before the people of Israel had kings. In fact, later on the people of Israel will say to Samuel, ". . . make us a king to judge us like all the nations" ([1Sam. 8:5](#)). They could have said, "Our brothers down south, the Edomites, have kings. We would like to have kings like they do."

And these are the names of the dukes that came of Esau,
according to their families, after their places, by their names; duke
Timnah, duke Alvah, duke Jetheth,

Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon,

Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar,

Duke Magdiel, duke Iram: these be the dukes of Edom, according
to their habitations in the land of their possession: he is Esau the
father of the Edomites [[Gen. 36:40-43](#)].

This is the family history of the rejected line. When the chapter gives the final resumé, it lists again the dukes that came from the line of Esau. There must have been a lot of bowing and scraping to each other when they got together. "I want you to meet my brother here. He is Duke Alvah" and "I want you to meet my friend. He is Duke Timnah." And the kings -- I doubt if you could even get in to see them!

This is a very interesting chapter for anyone who is interested in the study of anthropology or ethnology. A chapter like this gives a family history which probably extends farther back than any other source could go.

So the chapter closes with a list of the dukes and mentions again that their habitation is in the land of their possession which is Edom. "He is Esau the father of the Edomites." We see the working out of this in the prophecies of Obadiah and in Malachi. This is quite remarkable, friend, and something we cannot just pass by.

Chapter 37

THEME: Cause of strife in Jacob's family; the dreams of Joseph; Jacob sends Joseph to his brethren; Joseph sold into slavery

As we resume the story of the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we come to the fourth outstanding fixture in this last section of Genesis. From here, all the way through the Book of Genesis, the central figure is Joseph, although we are still dealing with the family of Jacob. More chapters are devoted to Joseph than to Abraham or Isaac or to anyone else. More chapters are devoted to Joseph than to the first whole period from [Genesis 1](#) -- [Genesis 11](#). This should cause the thoughtful student to pause and ask why Joseph should be given such prominence in Scripture.

There are probably several reasons. One is that the life of Joseph is a good and honorable life. He is the living example of the verse: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" ([Phil. 4:8](#)). God wants us to have whatever is good, virtuous, and great before us, and Joseph's life is just that.

There is a second reason, and it is a great one. There is no one in Scripture who is more like Christ in his person and experiences than Joseph. Yet nowhere in the New Testament is Joseph given to us as a type of Christ. However, the parallel cannot be accidental. As

we go on into his story, we shall mention many of these parallels. There are at least thirty which I shall list later.

So now we resume the story of the line of Jacob which is that line leading to the Messiah, the Christ. Jacob is living in Canaan as the story of Joseph begins.

Cause Of Strife In Jacob's Family (37:1-4)

And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan [[Gen. 37:1](#)].

Jacob has moved down, apparently, south of Bethlehem and has come to Hebron. This is the place where Abraham had made his home. This is the place of fellowship, of communion with God.

These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report [[Gen. 37:2](#)].

We can see that the bunch of boys Jacob had were real problem children (with the exception of Joseph and Benjamin). It took these men a long time to learn the lessons God would teach them.

Notice now that the emphasis shifts from Jacob to Joseph. Joseph was only seventeen, just a teenager, when this incident took place. He was the youngest of the boys out there with the flocks. Benjamin was still too young, you see, and was still at home. Joseph brought to his father a bad report about the other boys. Of course, they didn't like that. I'm sure they called him a tattletale.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours [[Gen. 37:3](#)].

Jacob should have learned a lesson in his own home. He knew that to play favorites would cause trouble in a family. His own father had favored the elder brother, and Jacob knew what it was to be discriminated against. But here he practices the very same thing. We can understand his feelings, knowing that Rachel was the wife whom he really loved -- she was the one fine thing in his life -- and Joseph is really a fine boy, and Jacob loves him dearly. While all this is true, it still is not an excuse. He should not have made him that coat of many colors.

Another possible translation of "coat of many colours" would be the "coat with sleeves," a long-sleeved robe. You see, the ordinary robe in those days consisted of one piece of cloth about ten feet long. They would put a hole in the middle of it and stick the head through this hole. Half of the cloth would drop down the front of the body and half the cloth down the back of the body. They would tie it together around the waist or seam up the sides, and that would be their coat. They didn't have sleeves. So to put sleeves in the coat of any person would set him off from the others. And certainly a coat of many colors would set him apart, also.

And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him [[Gen. 37:4](#)].

Naturally, the brothers hated him for being the favorite of his father. They couldn't even speak peaceably to him. So here we see strife in this family also. I tell you, I don't care whose family it is, sin will ruin it. Sin ruins lives, and sin ruins families; sin ruins communities, and it ruins nations. This is the problem with our families and cities and nations today. There is just one cause: God calls it sin.

So here we find that this boy Joseph is the object of discrimination. His father discriminates in his love for him. The brothers discriminate in their hatred against him.

The Dreams Of Joseph (37:5-11)

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed [[Gen. 37:5-6](#)].

How can we explain his conduct here? Why would he go to his father and tattle on his brothers in the first place when he knew it would incur their hatred? Well, I think he just didn't know how bad this world can be. He had no idea how bad his brothers were. I'm of the opinion that he was a rather gullible boy at this time. It took him a long time to find out about the ways of the world, but he certainly did learn. Eventually he probably knew as much about the world and the wickedness of man to man as anyone. But that was later on, not now.

You can just imagine how Joseph has been protected. His father centered all of his affection on Rachel. He had fallen in love with her at first sight and had worked fourteen years for her. Then many years went by before she bore him a child. Finally Joseph was born. What a delight that must have been for Jacob. But now Rachel is gone; so he centers his affection on this boy. He shouldn't have done that -- he has other sons to raise -- but that is what he has done. Joseph has been loved and protected.

For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words [[Gen. 37:7-8](#)].

Can't you imagine how they sneered? I'm sure they were cynical. They didn't really believe that he would rule over them. Yet, they hated him because he had this dream. This doesn't end the dreams, though. He had another one.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying [[Gen. 37:9-11](#)].

He told them this dream and they understood what he was talking about. This same image appears in [Revelation 12:1](#) where a woman is described clothed with the sun, and the moon is under her feet, and she had a crown of twelve stars upon her head. That means the nation of Israel. These brethren understood that Joseph was telling them about themselves, the sons of Israel.

We are seeing the nation of Israel at its beginning here. Genesis is like a bud, and the flower opens up as we go through the Scripture. Here is a bud that is not going to open up until we get into the Book of Revelation. It is a late bloomer, by the way, but it is going to open up there. We need to understand what is being said rather than try to make guesses. We don't need to be guessing when it is made this clear.

Old Jacob understood it exactly, and he chided, "Does this mean that your father, your mother, and your brothers are going to bow down to you?" All Joseph could answer was, "That was the dream." He didn't try to interpret it because it was evident. His brothers just dismissed it, paid no attention to it. They thought it wasn't even in the realm of possibility, as far as they were concerned. They knew that not one of them would ever bow down to Joseph! But Jacob observed the saying.

Jacob Sends Joseph To His Brethren (37:12-28)

And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem [[Gen. 37:12](#)].

At this time, Jacob and his family were living around Hebron, which was twenty or more miles south of Jerusalem. And Shechem is that far north of Jerusalem, so that these boys are grazing the sheep a long ways from home. We can see that they grazed their sheep over that entire area.

And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I [[Gen. 37:13](#)].

Joseph said, "All right, I'll go." He was very obedient to his father, you will notice.

And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem [[Gen. 37:14](#)].

Joseph had traveled all the way from Hebron to Shechem. When he reached Shechem, he began to look around for them. That is rugged terrain up there, and this boy couldn't locate them.

And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? [[Gen. 37:15](#)].

I can imagine that this man had seen Joseph pass his tent several times; so he asks him who he is looking for.

And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.

And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan [[Gen. 37:16-17](#)].

Dothan is a long way north of Shechem. It is near the Valley of Esdraelon, and this is where the brothers have moved the sheep. And at last Joseph found them -- there they were.

And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams [[Gen. 37:18-20](#)].

How they hated Joseph! Here they are probably almost one hundred miles from home, and they say to each other, "Let's get rid of him now, and we'll see what will become of his dreams!"

Before we go on with the story, I want to call to your attention the comparison of Joseph to the Lord Jesus. You just should not miss the analogy.

1. The birth of Joseph was miraculous in that it was by the intervention of God as an answer to prayer. The Lord Jesus is virgin born. His birth was certainly miraculous!
2. Joseph was loved by his father. The Lord Jesus was loved by His Father, who declared, "This is My beloved Son."
3. Joseph had the coat of many colors which set him apart. Christ was set apart in that He was "separate from sinners."
4. Joseph announced that he was to rule over his brethren. The Lord Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah. Just as they ridiculed Joseph's message, so they also ridiculed Jesus. In fact, nailed to His cross were the words: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
5. Joseph was sent by his father to his brethren. Jesus was sent to His brethren -- He came first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
6. Joseph was hated by his brethren without a cause, and the Lord Jesus was hated by His brethren without a cause.

As we return to the story now, remember that Joseph is approaching his brothers, and they are plotting against him. He is wearing that coat of many colors or with the sleeves, which was a mark of position. We must remember that Joseph was younger than his brothers yet was in a position above them. So there is all this hatred and jealousy -- to the point of murder!

Reuben has already lost his position as the firstborn. However, he stands in a good light here. He has more mature judgment than the others.

And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him [[Gen. 37:21](#)].

They would have killed him right then and there if Reuben had not intervened.

And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again [[Gen. 37:22](#)].

It was Reuben's avowed purpose, after Joseph had been put into the pit, to slip back again and take him out of the pit and take him home to his father.

And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him [[Gen. 37:23](#)].

That coat Joseph wore was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. They hated it because it set him apart from them. According to the law of primogeniture, the older brothers had a prior claim; so they stripped off from Joseph the hated coat.

And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt [[Gen. 37:24-25](#)].

This was a caravan of traders that was going by.

And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content [[Gen. 37:26-27](#)].

Now Judah intervenes when he sees some traders going by. It is a very mercenary plan that he has, but at least he doesn't want murder to take place. He doesn't want the blood of Joseph to be on their hands. The brothers were satisfied with the suggestion because what they wanted was to get rid of him -- they didn't care how it was accomplished. They realized the Ishmeelites would take him down to Egypt and would sell him there as a slave. At least they would be rid of him. Slavery in most places was a living death, and they knew they would certainly never hear from him again.

Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph to Egypt [[Gen. 37:28](#)].

At this point you are probably thinking that Moses (who wrote the Genesis record) should make up his mind. First he calls them Ishmeelites, then Midianites, and then he calls them Ishmeelites again. So who are they? Is this an error in the Bible? Some time ago a student brought to me a little booklet, which had been handed to him, listing a thousand or two thousand so-called errors in the Bible. After looking it over, the only errors I found were in that little book -- not in the Bible. One of the so-called errors was this matter of calling the men of this caravan Ishmeelites, then Midianites, then Ishmeelites again.

This is an interesting point, and it deserves a closer look. First of all, it reveals how the critic and those who hate the Bible can interpret as an error something that actually shows the accuracy of the biblical record.

Who are the Ishmeelites? They are the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham. Who are the Midianites? They are the descendants of Midian, a son of Abraham. Ishmael was the son of Abraham by Hagar, and Midian was the son of Abraham by Keturah whom he married after the death of Sarah. They are all brethren -- they are actually kin to this group of boys who are selling their brother! At this time, who was an Israelite? Well, there were only twelve of them. How many Ishmeelites do you think there might be by this time? Ishmael was older than Isaac, so maybe there were one hundred or more. How many Midianites would there be? Well, Midian was born after Isaac; so there couldn't be too many -- maybe a dozen or more. These were little groups, and in that day travel was dangerous. They were going across the desert to Egypt. They joined together for protection, and they joined together for a common interest. They were going on a business trip to Egypt, and, since they were related, they understood each other and joined together.

May I say that the Word of God makes good sense if you just let it make good sense. We are the folk that don't make the good sense. Ignorance adds a great deal to what people consider contradictions in the Bible. You can see that Moses understood what the situation was, and he wrote precisely.

Joseph Sold Into Slavery (37:29-36)

So the brothers sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites who take him down to Egypt.

And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood [[Gen. 37:29-31](#)].

Scripture does not tell us whether they told Reuben what they actually had done, but I'm of the opinion they did. And they probably said it was no use chasing after the merchants

because they were a long way off by now; so he might as well help them think up a good story to tell Jacob.

And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no [[Gen. 37:32](#)].

Pretty clever, isn't it? They act as if they had never seen Joseph. They pretend they just found this coat. Believe me, they knew that hated coat! But they pretend they don't recognize it and ask their father whether he recognizes it. Jacob knew whose coat it was. He comes to a natural conclusion and, of course, the conclusion to which the brothers intended for him to come.

And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces [[Gen. 37:33](#)].

Let's pause and take another look at this. They killed a kid of the goats and used that blood on the coat. Does this matter of deceiving a father with a goat remind us of something we've heard before? Remember that when Rebekah and Jacob were conniving, they used a kid for the savory meat dish, and they took the skin of the goat and put it on the hands and arms of Jacob to deceive his father. Now the brothers of Joseph are using the blood of a goat to deceive their father, who is none other than Jacob himself. They hand the coat to him and say, "Do you recognize it? We just found it up there in the mountains. It looks like a wild beast must have got to him." Old Jacob came to the conclusion that his son Joseph had been killed.

Notice this very carefully. Jacob is deceived in exactly the same way that he had deceived. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" ([Gal. 6:7](#)) -- not something else, not something similar, but the same thing. This man Jacob did some bad sowing. He used deception, and now that he is a father, he is deceived in the identical way that he had deceived his own father years before.

When we sow corn, we reap corn. When we sow tares, we reap tares. We get exactly what we sow. This is true in any realm you wish to move in today. It is true in the physical realm, in the moral, and in the spiritual realm. That is true also for the believer. If you think you can get by with sin because you are a child of God, you have another thought coming. In fact, you'd better take that other thought and not commit the sin because God is no respecter of persons. He said this is the way it is going to be, and you are not an exception. I talked to a minister who had gotten involved with another man's wife. As I talked with him, he tried to justify himself on the basis that he was someone special to the Lord. He felt that because he was who he was, he could operate on a little different plane and by a different rule book than anyone else. But he found that God is no respecter of persons.

Now notice the grief of Jacob --

And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted: and he said, For I will go down into

the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him [[Gen. 37:34-35](#)].

Perhaps some will think his grief is a demonstration of how much Jacob loved his son Joseph. I'll admit that he certainly loved this boy. But it reveals that Jacob had not learned to walk by faith yet, friend. You recall the experience he had at Peniel. It was the deflation of the old ego. The flesh collapsed there, but now he must learn to walk by faith. He hasn't learned that yet. In fact, the faith of Jacob is mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, but nothing in his life is mentioned there as an example of his faith until the time of his death. Then faith is exhibited.

Compare his grief here to the grief of a man like David ([2Sam. 12:15-23](#)). David wept over the baby boy of his who died. He loved that little one just as much as Jacob loved Joseph, but David was a man of faith. He knew the little one couldn't come back to him, and he also knew that he was going to the little fellow some day. What faith! You see, Jacob is not walking by faith, friend. This is abnormal grief.

Christian friend, perhaps you have lost a loved one. Perhaps you just can't get over it. I want to say to you kindly, not brutally, but kindly: learn to walk by faith. You manifest faith when you recognize that you can't bring that one back by grieving. It does no good at all. If you are a child of God and you are grieving over one who is a child of God, then walk by faith. You will see that one again and never be separated. The world has no faith -- they grieve as those without hope. Christian friend, you can walk by faith.

Now the final verse of this chapter follows Joseph to Egypt --

And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard [[Gen. 37:36](#)].

We will leave Joseph right there and pick up his story in chapter 39.

Chapter 38

THEME: The sin and shame of Judah

This is another chapter that seems to be about as necessary as a fifth leg on a cow. After you have read the story, you may wish that it had been left out of the Bible. Many people have asked me why this chapter is in the Word of God. I agree that it is one of the worst chapters in the Bible, but it gives us some background on the tribe of Judah, out of which the Lord Jesus Christ came. This fact makes it important that it be included in the biblical record. In this chapter you will read names like Judah and Tamar and Pharez and Zerah. If you think they sound familiar, it is because you have read them in the first chapter of Matthew. They are in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. My friend, that is an amazing thing! Our Lord came into a sinful line. He was made in all points like as we are, yet He Himself was without sin. He came into that human line where all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

This chapter deals with the sin and the shame of Judah. This leads me to say that the sons of Jacob were certainly not very much of a comfort to him. It looks as if all the sons were problem children, with the exception of Joseph and Benjamin. And Joseph was no

comfort because his father was heartbroken about his disappearance. All of this reveals to us that Jacob spent too much time in Padan-aram accumulating a fortune rather than teaching his children. How different he was from Abraham. You remember that God had said of Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" ([Gen. 18:19](#)).

Well, Jacob didn't do that. He was so busy down there contending with Uncle Laban that he didn't have much time for his boys. That was tragic, because each one of them seemed to have gotten involved in something that was very sinful.

There is, I believe, a further reason for including this chapter in the Word of God at this juncture. Beginning with the next chapter, we go down to the land of Egypt with Joseph. God is sending Joseph ahead, as he very clearly detected from the fortuitous concurrence of circumstances in his life, to prepare the way for the coming down of the children of Israel into Egypt. It would preserve their lives during the famine in Canaan, but more than that, it would get them out of the land of Canaan from the abominable Canaanites into the seclusion of the land of Goshen in Egypt. Had Jacob and his family continued on in Canaan, they would have dropped down to the level of the Canaanites. The chapter before us reveals the necessity of getting the family of Jacob away from the degrading influence of the Canaanites.

This is the story of Judah, whose line will be the kingly line among the tribes of Israel.

And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.

And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her [[Gen. 38:1-2](#)].

He went down to do business with a certain Adullamite, and when he got down there he saw this Canaanite woman, and he had an affair with her.

And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er [[Gen. 38:3](#)].

Judah called his name Er -- and Judah certainly had erred; he had sinned.

And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan.

And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.

And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar [[Gen. 38:4-6](#)].

This is the first appearance of Tamar. She gets into the genealogy of Christ this way! Now, look at this family. It is just loaded with sin.

And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him.

And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also [[Gen. 38:7-10](#)].

This reminds us of the present hour when there is so much emphasis on sex.

Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house [[Gen. 38:11](#)].

It was the custom of that day that when a man died, his brother was to marry his widow. Onan refused to do it, and he was smitten with death.

Now Judah has another son who is growing up, and he tells his daughter-in-law to follow the custom of returning to her father's house until the younger son is ready for marriage.

And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep [[Gen. 38:12-13](#)].

Apparently this deal that Judah had, which concerned seeing this Adullamite by the name of Hirah, was in connection with sheep. They were raising sheep and must have had a tremendous flock together. Judah goes up there to shear them. In the meantime, Tamar has been waiting all this while at home. She comes to the conclusion that Judah is not going to give Shelah to her as her husband.

And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife [[Gen. 38:14](#)].

Shelah was, of course, the third son of Judah. Tamar sees that Judah doesn't intend to give her to him as his wife; so she takes action. She takes off her widow's clothes and sits by the wayside with her face covered as was the custom of harlots.

And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? [[Gen. 38:16](#)].

We get a picture of Judah. He had propositioned the Canaanite woman, Shuah's daughter. Now he does the same thing with Tamar. This is a very black picture and an ugly story

that we have here. Judah thought she was a harlot. She saw the opportunity of taking advantage of him, and she did it.

And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it?

And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.

And she arose, and went away, and laid by her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood.

And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand; but he found her not [[Gen. 38:17-20](#)].

Judah sent his friend into town who said, "I'm looking for the harlot that is here."

Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this place.

And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place.

And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt [[Gen. 38:21-24](#)].

That's Judah. Here is the old double standard. God doesn't approve of these things, friend. It is here in His Word, but that doesn't mean that He approves of it. His people are acting just like the Canaanites, which is the reason He is going to get them out of this land and take them down into the land of Egypt. There He is going to separate them and isolate them in the land of Goshen to get them away from this terrible influence. This episode reveals the necessity for God to do this.

Judah is acting in a way that is unspeakable it is so bad. The fact of the matter is, he is quick to see the sin in somebody else, but he can't see it in himself. It reminds us of the time Nathan went in to David and told him the story about the fellow who had one little ewe lamb. When Nathan said the rich man came and took it away, David was quick to condemn the rich man. David reacted just like Judah does here. David said he wanted the rich man stoned to death. Then Nathan declared that David himself was the man. It is interesting that we can all see sin so clearly in other people, but we can't see it within our own being.

The charge against Judah is really a double one. His sin is terrible in itself, but it was with his own daughter-in-law! This is the way the Canaanites lived. We think that we are in a sex revolution today and there is a new sexual freedom. My friend, for centuries the

heathen have had sexual freedom. That's part of heathendom, and it is the reason they lived as low as they did. It is the reason they were judged and removed from the scene. The Canaanites are gone. They have disappeared. God has judged them. That ought to be a message to any person. Yet a great many people don't seem to get the message -- even Christians! You wonder why this chapter is in the Bible. It is in the Bible as a warning to us. It is in the Bible to let us know that God did not approve of sin, and it explains why God took Israel out of the land of Palestine and down into the land of Egypt.

Tamar is then brought into the presence of her father-in-law.

When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying,
By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said,
Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets,
and staff [[Gen. 38:25](#)].

Judah was going to have her burnt. But she said, "Well, I would like you to know who the father of the child is; he is the one who owns these articles that I'm showing you." Judah looked at them and had to admit they were his own.

And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more
righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son.
And he knew her again no more [[Gen. 38:26](#)].

This was repulsive even to Judah, but we can see how he had adopted some of the customs of the Canaanites.

May I pause for a moment to make an application? Remember, all these things are written for our learning. They are examples unto us. Today we hear that if we are going to witness to this generation and if we are going to communicate to them, we've got to get down to their level. I disagree with that. God has never used that method to witness. God has always, under all circumstances, asked His people to live on a high and lofty plane.

I can well imagine one of our present-day theologians going up to Noah and saying, "Brother Noah, you're spending all your time working on this boat, and it is silly for you to be doing that. We're having a big party over in Babylon tonight. They just got a new shipment of marijuana and we are really going to blow our minds. We're going to pass around the grass and we're going to have a high time and take a little trip. You don't need to build that boat for a trip; we'll give you a trip. Come on over." Noah, of course, would refuse. So the theologian would ask Noah, "How do you expect to reach all the hippies of Babylon? How are you going to reach the Babylonian beboppers unless you are willing to come down and communicate with them?" The fact of the matter is, God never asked Noah to come down to "communicate." God asked him to give His message.

And this is what God asks us to do in our day. I am firmly convinced that if God's people would give out His Word and live lives that would commend the gospel, He would make their witness effective. There are many pastors in our day who are so afraid they will lose the crowd that they do anything to attract people to their church -- and some of them are having their problems. But God has never asked us to compromise. God does ask us to give out the Word of God -- regardless of the size of our congregation.

This reminds me of the story about Dr. Scofield who was invited to speak over in North Carolina. The first service was on a rainy night, and very few people came to hear him speak. The pastor felt that he must apologize to Dr. Scofield; so he reached over and told him that he was sorry so few people had come to hear a man of his caliber. Dr. Scofield replied to the pastor, "My Lord had only twelve men to speak to, and since He had only twelve men and never complained, who is C. I. Scofield that he should complain about a small crowd?" Friend, this is a lesson for our generation to learn. We so often think that there must be crowds or else God is not in it. Maybe God has called us to witness to a few. But I have news for you: If you give out the Word of God, it will have its effect. My friend, the Word of God is powerful, and God is looking for clean vessels through whom he can give it out.

Well, Judah had certainly lowered himself to the level of the Canaanites, and look at the results.

And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb.

And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first.

And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez.

And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zerah [[Gen. 38:27-30](#)].

Now if we turn over to the New Testament, we will find the genealogy of the Lord Jesus in Matthew, chapter 1. There we read: "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; and Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram" ([Matt. 1:2-3](#)). Then as we follow through the genealogy, we come to this verse: "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" ([Matt. 1:16](#)). It is an amazing thing that the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the flesh, should come through the line of Judah and Tamar! When He came into the human family, He came in a sinful line. He was made sin for us, He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (see [2Cor. 5:21](#)).

Chapter 39

THEME: Overseer in the house of Potiphar; tempted, then framed by Potiphar's wife; Joseph imprisoned

We return to the story of Joseph after the interlude of chapter 38, which we classified as one of the worst chapters in the Bible because it certainly tells a sordid story of the man Judah.

We will discover that Joseph is altogether different from Judah. I have always felt that Joseph and Benjamin got a great deal of teaching, instruction, and personal attention that

the other ten boys did not receive. These seemed to be the only two boys in whom Jacob was interested.

Because of the hatred and animosity of Joseph's brothers, he was sold into slavery and taken to the land of Egypt.

To be in a foreign land and sold into slavery is a very dreary prospect for a seventeen-year-old boy. There is certainly nothing in the outward aspect of things to bring any encouragement to his heart. Joseph seems to be more or less a hardluck boy. Even in the land of Egypt, just as things would begin to move smoothly for him, something else would happen. Of course, it always happened for a purpose, even though that was difficult for Joseph to see.

There is no person in the Old Testament in whose life the purpose of God is more clearly seen than Joseph. The providence of God is manifest in every detail of his life. The hand of God is upon him and the leading of the Lord is evident, but Joseph is the one patriarch to whom God did not appear directly, according to the text of Scripture. God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but not to Joseph. Yet the direction of God in his life is more clearly seen than in any other. He is the Old Testament example of [Romans 8:28](#): "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Joseph himself expressed it in rather vivid language. At the death of their father, Joseph's brothers felt that Joseph might turn on them, and they came to him asking for mercy. He told them that he held no grudge against them at all and said, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" ([Gen. 50:20](#)). Although everything seemed to go wrong for him and the outward aspect was dark -- it looked terrible -- each event was a step bringing to fruition God's purpose in this man's life.

My friend, in our own lives we need to reckon on the fact that ". . . whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" ([Heb. 12:6](#)). If we are the children of God, in the will of God, we can have the assurance of God that nothing comes to us without His permission. God works all things together for good to them who love Him. Even our misfortunes, heartbreaks, and sufferings are for our good and His glory.

There is a hedge about every child of God, and nothing gets through it without the permission of God. You remember that, when Satan wanted to test Job, he said to God: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land" ([Job 1:10](#)). Satan asked God to let the hedge down. Even if Satan gets God's permission to test us, still all things will work for our good.

Dr. Torrey used to say that [Romans 8:28](#) is the soft pillow for a tired heart. And someone else has put it like this: "God nothing does, nor suffers to be done, but what we would ourselves, if we but could see through all events of things as well as He."

There is another aspect of the life of Joseph which should be an encouragement to every child of God. None of God's children today have ever had a direct revelation from God. Some modern false prophets claim to the contrary, but God has not appeared directly to

any person today. It is for our encouragement that God did not appear to Joseph directly because we can still know that He is leading and directing us.

Now let's follow this young man Joseph and see what is going to happen to him.

Overseer In The House Of Potiphar (39:1-6)

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither [[Gen. 39:1](#)].

This fine-looking young man, seventeen years old, would be a prize as a slave in the market. He was bought by Potiphar who was a captain of the guard. Potiphar was in the military, he had his office in the Pentagon of that day, and he was part of the brass, a prominent official.

And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian [[Gen. 39:2](#)].

Immediately, when he gets into the home of Potiphar who is an officer of Pharaoh, it is obvious that the Lord is with Joseph. Blessing came to that home when Joseph came.

And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand [[Gen. 39:3](#)].

Life is great up to this point. You'd like to add that they all lived happily ever after, but they didn't. This is not a story; it is reality. The child of God is going to encounter temptation, trouble, and problems in this world. This is what is going to happen to Joseph.

And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand [[Gen. 39:4](#)].

Just think of this! Because of the way Joseph serves, he is elevated to the position of handling all the material substance -- the chattels and probably even the real estate -- of Potiphar. The man trusted him with everything.

And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured [[Gen. 39:5-6](#)].

Potiphar trusted Joseph so much that he never even demanded an accounting -- he didn't have to hire a C.P.A. to go over the books. He believed in the integrity of this young man. The only thing that Potiphar worried about, as an officer of Pharaoh, was that he should please Pharaoh and do a good job there. He let Joseph handle his personal affairs. When he sat down at the table, the food was put before him. That's all that he was interested in because he trusted this young man.

Tempted, Then Framed By Potiphar's Wife (39:7-19)

Now notice what happens --

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me [[Gen. 39:7](#)].

Potiphar had given him the full run of his home, and Joseph had charge of everything. While Joseph was busy, Potiphar's wife was also busy. She was busy scheming. Joseph was a handsome young man. It may be that Potiphar was an old man because it was generally the custom in that day for an older man to have a young wife. She sees Joseph, and she attempts to entice him.

But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? [[Gen. 39:8-9](#)].

Now do you notice that this young man is serving God in all of this? When he went down to Egypt, it was a land filled with idolatry just as much as Babylon was. In that land of idolatry, Joseph maintained a testimony for the living and true God and a high moral standard. When this woman enticed him, he said, "My master has turned over everything to me but you -- you are his wife." Notice what a high viewpoint Joseph had on marriage.

You see, God has given marriage to all mankind. When a person begins to despise the marriage vows, he is beginning to despise God, my friend. A man who will break his marriage vows will generally break any vow he has made to God. It has been interesting for me to note in my ministry that a divorced person, that is, one who gets divorced because he or she has been unfaithful, generally will get as far from God as any person possibly can. I've seen that happen again and again.

Joseph here is attempting to be true to God. What a high viewpoint he has! Yet, look at what is going to come to pass because he attempts to serve the living and true God.

And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her [[Gen. 39:10](#)].

This man, Potiphar, as an officer of Pharaoh, would be away from home a great deal. Maybe he was away from home too much. This woman didn't tempt Joseph only one time, but again and again and again. It was a constant temptation to him, yet this young man did not yield. You can imagine that there begins to well up in her a boiling resentment against Joseph. The old bromide has it, "Hell hath no fury like that of a woman scorned." Believe me, she is going to take revenge on Joseph.

And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice [[Gen. 39:11-14](#)].

Things weren't so well between Potiphar and his wife. Notice how she speaks of him in such a mean, degrading way. She says that he brought in a Hebrew to mock them. In other words, the wife probably had been guilty of this before. The man whom I feel most sorry for is Potiphar. He is the sap if there ever was one. Possibly he suspected something all along.

She is beginning now to cover up her tracks --

And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice, and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home [[Gen. 39:15-16](#)].

So here is the boy Joseph in his teens, down there alone in Egypt, and he is being framed in the most dastardly manner. She brings this charge against Joseph to the other men. Her husband was away from home; so she has all this story built up to tell him when he arrives.

And she spake unto him, according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock:

And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled [[Gen. 39:17-19](#)].

On the surface it seems that Potiphar believes her story, at least it made him angry at the moment. He was an officer in the army of Pharaoh and must have been a pretty sharp man to be among the brass. But he certainly was a stupid husband. It is my personal feeling that he recognized the kind of wife he had and thought the expedient thing was to throw Joseph into prison and forget the whole matter. I feel sorry for him, married to this woman. I'm of the opinion that she had been unfaithful many times before and that Joseph was just another one in her series of conquests -- only it just didn't work with Joseph, so she framed him.

Joseph Imprisoned (39:20-23)

And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison [[Gen. 39:20](#)].

This boy is certainly having bad luck, is he not? There at home he was the favorite of his father, wearing a coat of many colors. The next thing he knew, his brothers had taken off the coat and put him down in a pit. He hears them dickering with some tradesmen, and then he is sold down to Egypt. He was only seventeen years old, and I am of the opinion that on the way down, and after he got there, he spent many nights wetting the pillow with his tears. He certainly was homesick.

Now he's getting along in this new position, just elevated to a high position because he is a capable and fine-looking young man. Then the wife of Potiphar attempts to lure him to commit sin. His high moral standard prevents him from yielding. As a result of that, she frames him. This poor boy just doesn't stand a chance.

We need to remember that, although Joseph had been elevated in his position, he is still a slave. Potiphar's wife would be like Caesar's wife -- one just wouldn't dare say anything about her. Obviously her word would be accepted. Poor Joseph! He doesn't need to even open his mouth. He is declared guilty before he can make any kind of a defense at all. He immediately finds himself put into prison, the prison where the prisoners of Pharaoh were placed.

But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper [[Gen. 39:21-23](#)].

The hand of God is obvious in this young man's life, but over against it are the terrible things that happen to him. Now he finds himself in prison. How discouraging that would have been to the average person. But the interesting thing is that the Lord is with Joseph. Although He does not appear to him, as He had to the other patriarchs, He shows him mercy. First He causes the keeper of the prison to like him and to trust him. Although Joseph is naturally a very attractive young man and has tremendous ability, the important thing to note is that all of this would have come to naught had not God been with him. God is with him and is leading him. All of these experiences are moving toward the accomplishment of a purpose in this young man's life.

Joseph recognized this, and it gave him a buoyancy, an attitude of optimism. The circumstances did not get him down. He lived on top of his circumstances. I have a preacher friend who tells me my problem is that the circumstances are all on top of me! I think many of us live that way. But Joseph was one who was living on top of his circumstances. The Lord was with him. He recognized the hand of God in his life, and so he was not discouraged. Discouragement is one of the finest weapons Satan has -- discouragement and disappointment. This young man seems to have surmounted all of

his circumstances. He reminds us of the passage in Hebrews: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" ([Heb. 12:11](#)).

Certainly the chastening of the Lord is going to yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness in the life of this young man.

The story of Joseph reveals that not every man has his price. Satan says that he does, but there have been several men whom Satan could not buy. Joseph was one of these. Job was another, and the apostle Paul was still another. Satan despises mankind, but these and many more are men whom Satan found he could not buy.

Is it the will of God that Joseph be in prison? Well, my friend, it is almost essential that he be there. We'll see that in the next chapter.

Chapter 40

THEME: Joseph interprets dreams for the butler and baker; fulfillment of the dreams

This chapter, rather than advancing the story of Joseph, seems to slow it down to absolutely no movement at all. We see Joseph in prison, and he is delayed and circumscribed by the ingratitude of the chief butler of Pharaoh. We may ask what all this means. May I say to you that all of this is accomplishing God's plan and purpose in Joseph's life. We will see this as we get into the chapter.

In chapter 37 we started a comparison between Joseph and the Lord Jesus. Now that we are farther along in the story, let us stop to make some more comparisons:

1. Joseph was sent to his brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ was sent to His brethren, the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
2. Joseph was hated by his brethren without a cause, and this is what the Lord Jesus says about Himself, "They hated me without a cause."
3. Joseph was sold by his own brothers, and the Lord Jesus was sold by one of His own brethren.
4. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver. The Lord Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver.
5. The brothers plotted to kill Joseph. The brethren plotted to kill the Lord Jesus -- "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."
6. Joseph was put into the pit which was meant to be a place of death for him. The Lord Jesus was crucified.
7. Joseph was raised up out of that pit. The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day.
8. Joseph obeyed his father. The Lord Jesus obeyed His Father so that He could say that He always did the things which pleased His Father.
9. Joseph's father had sent him to seek his brethren. We are told that the Lord Jesus Christ came to do the will of His Father when he came here not seek His brethren.

10. Joseph was mocked by his brethren. When they saw him coming, they said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." The Lord Jesus was mocked by His brethren. When He was on the Cross, they said, "If He be the Christ, let Him come down now from the cross."

11. The brothers refused to receive Joseph, and the brethren of the Lord Jesus, the Jews, refused to receive Him.

12. They took counsel to kill Joseph, and we are told they took counsel to plot the death of the Lord Jesus.

13. Joseph's coat dripping with blood was returned to his father. They took the coat of the Lord Jesus and gambled for it.

14. After Joseph was sold into Egypt, he was lost sight of for many years. Christ ascended up into heaven. He told His disciples that they should see Him no more until His return.

15. Joseph was tempted by the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and he resisted. The Lord Jesus was tempted by the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and He won the victory.

16. Joseph became the savior of the world during this period, in the physical sense -- he saved them from starvation. The Lord Jesus Christ in every sense is the Savior of the whole world.

17. Joseph was hated by his brothers, and they delivered him to the Gentiles. He couldn't defend himself, and he was unjustly accused. The Lord Jesus was also delivered by His own to the religious rulers who in turn delivered Him to the Gentiles. He was innocent.

18. Pilate did not believe the accusation which was brought against the Lord Jesus. He found Him innocent, yet he scourged Him. And Joseph had to suffer although Potiphar probably knew that he was innocent. Potiphar had to keep up a front before Pharaoh as Pilate had to keep up a front before Caesar.

19. Joseph found favor in the sight of the jailer. And in the case of Jesus, the Roman centurion said of Him, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

20. Joseph was numbered with the transgressors. He was a blessing to the butler, and he was judgment for the baker. The Lord Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One was judged and the other was blessed.

In the chapter before us we will begin to see why it was the will of God that Joseph be in prison at this time.

Joseph Interprets Dreams For The Butler And Baker (40:1-19)

And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt.

And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound [[Gen. 40:1-3](#)].

That was no accident!

What does this reveal? It certainly reveals to us the arbitrary and dictatorial position and policy that the pharaohs of Egypt had. I don't know what the baker did -- maybe he burned the biscuits for breakfast. For some whim, Pharaoh put him into prison. What did the butler do? Maybe he was bringing up a glass of wine to Pharaoh and stubbed his toe and spilled it on the Persian rug that was there. I don't know. It isn't told us why both the baker and the butler of Pharaoh were in the prison, but the important thing is that they are put where Joseph is. Joseph occupies a good position, even here in the prison. Everywhere he went, his ability was certainly recognized. "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men" ([Prov. 18:16](#)). Certainly this was true for Joseph. And God is moving in his life with a very definite purpose.

And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward [[Gen. 40:4](#)].

Joseph got acquainted with them because he had charge of them. It was his business to take care of them while they were in prison.

And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.

And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and behold, they were sad [[Gen. 40:5-6](#)].

Joseph was an optimistic type of individual, always bright and sharp, and he finds these two fellows, who occupy positions with Pharaoh, sitting dolefully with very dark looks upon their faces.

And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly today?

And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you [[Gen. 40:7-8](#)].

Joseph gives God all the glory in this. Later on we will find another young Hebrew in a foreign court who will do the same thing -- Daniel also gave God the glory. I wish Christians today would do this. Anything you or I do for the Lord should be done to the praise of God. Make sure that God gets the glory for it. I believe that one of the reasons many of us are not blessed as much as the Lord would like to bless us is because when we do receive something wonderful, we take it for granted and we do not give God the glory for it. We need to give God the glory. Joseph should give God the glory, and he does! He says, "Do not interpretations belong to God?"

And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me;

And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes:

And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days:

Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler [[Gen. 40:9-13](#)].

It is interesting to see that God used dreams in the Old Testament. We don't find God moving that way in the New Testament, because then the canon of Scripture was complete. We don't need dreams today, but in that day, God did speak in dreams, and He used symbols that were meaningful to them. A butler would understand about serving wine -- that was what he did for Pharaoh. Later on we will find King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of an image. Now he was certainly acquainted with images and with idols -- that would be something that he could understand very well.

Joseph was able to interpret the dream and promised the butler that he would be restored in three days.

But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house [[Gen. 40:14](#)].

He says, "Now you will be out of here in three days, but I'll be here until I rot unless somebody moves in my behalf. I've interpreted your dream -- please don't forget me!"

Now he gives him something of his background --

For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon [[Gen. 40:15](#)].

Although the record doesn't tell us, the butler probably promised that he would speak to Pharaoh in Joseph's behalf.

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head:

And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head [[Gen. 40:16-17](#)].

The dream of the baker is in a symbol meaningful to him. He can understand a basket filled with little cookies, sweetmeats.

And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof:
The three baskets are three days:

Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee,
and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh
from off thee [[Gen. 40:18-19](#)].

Joseph's interprets his dream for him but warns that it is not going to be good for him. In three days he is to be taken out and hanged, and the birds will eat his flesh.

Fulfillment Of The Dreams (40:20-23)

And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday,
that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the
head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he
gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand:

But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him [[Gen. 40:20-23](#)].

Poor Joseph! This seems like a hopeless predicament now. Here he is, not only a slave, but one who has been falsely accused. Believe me, the prison bars are just as real as if he were guilty of some crime. The poor boy is here, and it is the purpose of Potiphar to forget him. That is his way of covering up the scandal that was in his own home. Joseph has to pay for Potiphar's cover-up. Joseph's one glimmer of light had been that the butler would remember him to Pharaoh. This seemed to be such a marvelous way of getting the ear of Pharaoh. But the butler is so elated with going back to his job and being in favor with Pharaoh again that he forgets all about poor Joseph. God wants to leave him there for a purpose. Suppose the butler had said to Pharaoh, "There is a prisoner down there who is innocent. He should not be there -- he has been falsely accused. And he interpreted my dream for me. I sure would appreciate it, Pharaoh, if you would let him out." Suppose Pharaoh had let him out, don't you see what would have happened? He would have been at home in the land of Canaan at the time that Pharaoh needed him to interpret his dream. God wants to keep him nearby, and prison is a convenient place to keep him -- there will be no difficulty in Pharaoh's finding him when he needs him.

In spite of the discouragement, Joseph believed that God was moving in his life, and there were fruits of faith which were apparent. He was faithful in every relationship of his life. He was faithful to Potiphar. In prison he was faithful to the keeper of the prison. He was faithful to God, always giving Him the glory. We will see later on that he will be faithful to Pharaoh, and he will be faithful to his own brothers. You see, Joseph's faith made him faithful. My friend, I believe that if you are truly a believer, you will be faithful.

We are living in a day when one of the tragic things happening is that there are so few Christians one can depend upon. I have a friend who is the head of a large Christian organization. We had a chance to sit together alone in a foreign city, just he and I. He was telling me some of the problems he had. He is in a tremendous organization, and yet he

was telling me how few men he could really trust in his organization. Remember, this is a Christian organization. We see so few men in true faithfulness to their positions. We thank God for those who are. I have always thanked the Lord that He has put around me, everywhere I have ever been, a few faithful ones. I tell you, they are dear ones who are a great encouragement.

Joseph was that kind of a man. His faith made him faithful. It also gave him his optimistic outlook on life, even under all his trials and temptations. And it was faith that gave him his sympathetic and kindly attitude toward everyone. Notice how kind he was to the butler and the baker. And later on we will see his kindness to his brothers. Another thing that his faith did for him was to make him a very humble man. He gave God the glory for all his achievements. What a wonderful person he was! And what was responsible? Well, he believed God. He believed God as his father Abraham had believed Him, and this was the fruit that faith produced in his life.

Here is Joseph -- forgotten in the prison. But Someone has not forgotten him; God has not forgotten him, and He is at work in his life.

Friend, this has a message for you and me. I don't know what your circumstances are right now, but I do know, judging from the letters that I get, that many folk are in a hard place. One man wrote to me, "I am between a rock and a hard place. Things look very dark." You don't see the way out, and you wonder if God cares. That is the reason God has given this story of Joseph. He wants you to know that He cares and that He is moving in your life. If you are His child, He is permitting things to happen to you for your own good. His chastisements are always for our good. Friend, we can't miss! How wonderful our God is!

Chapter 41

THEME: The dreams of Pharaoh; Joseph is made overseer of Egypt; Joseph's two sons - Manasseh and Ephraim

What a difference this chapter is from the previous one where we left Joseph down in jail, forgotten, forlorn, and forsaken. Yet all of this was happening to him for God's purpose in his life. If we could recognize God's hand in our lives today, it would give us a different outlook on life! In the chapter before us we will see that Joseph is released from prison when he interprets the dreams of Pharaoh. He is made overseer over the entire land of Egypt, and he marries Asenath, the daughter of the Priest of On, who bears him Manasseh and Ephraim.

This is a story of rags to riches. I know of no fictitious story more thrilling than this episode in the life of Joseph. In this chapter we can certainly see the hand of God in his life. And Joseph was conscious of God's care even during the days of adversity. This developed in him many virtues which are the fruit of the Spirit. One of them was patience. The truth expressed in [Romans 5:3](#) that tribulation (or trouble) worketh patience is definitely illustrated in the life of Joseph.

We find here that this boy is brought into the presence of Pharaoh, the gentile king, just as later on Daniel will be brought in before Nebuchadnezzar. Both of them are to interpret dreams.

Then we will consider the famine at the end of the chapter. What purpose of God is to be accomplished by this? God will use it to get the family of Jacob out of Canaan, away from the sins of the Canaanites and to bring them to Egypt to settle in the secluded spot of Goshen. That is one of His objectives. God had, I am sure, many other reasons, but this one is obvious.

As we go along, I hope you are still taking note of the ways in which Joseph is like the Lord Jesus Christ. We will make more of these comparisons later on. It is something important for us to be noting.

The Dreams Of Pharaoh (41:1-37)

Remember that in the previous chapter Pharaoh's butler and baker were put in the same prison where Joseph was incarcerated. Joseph interpreted their dreams correctly -- the baker was hanged, and the butler was restored to his position. Joseph had begged the butler to remember his plight and speak of it to Pharaoh, but he had not done so. Now God gives Pharaoh a dream --

And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river [[Gen. 41:1](#)].

Notice that it has been two full years since the close of the previous chapter. Joseph has spent two more years in jail, waiting for something to happen.

Here is Pharaoh's dream --

And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river [[Gen. 41:2-3](#)].

"Kine" are cows. We are talking about cattle here. He saw seven cows that were well-fed, fine-looking, fat cattle. Then he saw seven really skinny cows.

And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. Pharaoh awoke [[Gen. 41:4](#)].

Pharaoh woke up and wondered what the dream meant. He didn't have the interpretation, but there was nobody to help him that day.

And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.

And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled;
and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the
wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was
none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh [[Gen. 41:5-8](#)].

While all of these magicians and wise men were called in and Pharaoh was telling them his dream, the chief butler was there listening. After all, his position was to stand before Pharaoh and get him anything that he wanted. When none of the wise men could give Pharaoh an interpretation, the butler spoke up --

Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember
my faults this day [[Gen. 41:9](#)].

I would call it a little more than a "fault!" It was a sin, in my opinion. But, you see, all of this was in the providence of God. We would call them the fortuitous concurrence of circumstances. The difficult experiences of Joseph could not be understood at the time, but God was letting them happen for a purpose. Now the chief butler says, "Oh, I just remembered that I promised a young fellow down there in prison that I would speak to you about him. And, by the way, Pharaoh, he can interpret dreams." Now he tells Pharaoh his own experience --

Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the
captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker:

And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each
man according to the interpretation of his dream.

And there was with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the
captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our
dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he
restored unto mine office, and him he hanged [[Gen. 41:10-13](#)].

Pharaoh said, "Well, we've tried everybody else around here, and since that young man interpreted your dream and that of the baker, let's have him come because I have the feeling that my dreams are very significant."

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily
out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his
raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh [[Gen. 41:14](#)].

Note that Joseph shaved himself. You must remember that the Hebrews were not shaving in that day. But have you noticed that the statues and paintings of the Egyptians show a cleanshaven people? Many of the rulers sported a little goatee to add dignity to their position -- if they couldn't grow their own, they wore a false one -- but generally the Egyptians were without hair on their faces.

There is a tremendous message in this. This man is lifted up out of the prison now. He shaves, and changes his prison garb for proper court clothing. This is a new life that is before him. It is like a resurrection; he is raised up. Now he goes to the Gentiles. What a tremendous picture of Christ this gives to us here.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it [[Gen. 41:15](#)].

Notice how Joseph gives God the glory --

And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace [[Gen. 41:16](#)].

From Joseph's viewpoint, God must receive the glory. Again let me say that the child of God should be very careful that God gets the glory for all of His accomplishments. If what we do is a blessing, it is because God is doing it through us. Joseph is aware of this, and he says, "It is not in me -- I can't interpret it -- but God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Pharaoh repeats the dreams to Joseph. Actually, it is one dream of two parts, and it is treated as a single dream.

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do [[Gen. 41:25](#)].

Joseph says that the dream is one -- both speak of the same thing. And the fact that it was repeated, given to Pharaoh twice, adds to its importance. The reason for the dream is that God is letting Pharaoh know what He is about to do. Here is the interpretation --

The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous [[Gen. 41:26-31](#)].

This, you see, is a prediction. There are to be seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine.

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass [[Gen. 41:32](#)].

The famine had been determined by God, and He wants Pharaoh to know about it. Now here is the advice of Joseph to Pharaoh --

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants [[Gen. 41:33-37](#)].

Joseph advises Pharaoh to collect all the surplus during the seven years of plenty and keep it in store for the lean years.

Joseph Is Made Overseer Of Egypt (41:38-49)

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy words shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt [[Gen. 41:38-41](#)].

Notice the significance of this. At the beginning this boy had been in the back of the prison, forgotten, forsaken, and forlorn. Now he is brought out at the right psychological moment because nobody else can interpret the dream of Pharaoh. Not only does he interpret it, but in his enthusiasm and because he is a man of ability, he suggests what Pharaoh should do. God is leading him in all of this, of course.

There is to be a worldwide famine, a famine so severe that even Egypt will be affected. Because Egypt is an irrigated land, it is not dependent upon rainfall. The Upper Nile, the Blue Nile, comes down from Central Africa and furnishes the water upon which Egypt depends. Egypt gets about an inch of rainfall in a good year; so it is famine all the time as far as rainfall is concerned. But the Nile overflows the land every year, bringing not only water, but sediment which fertilizes the soil. However, God has warned that there will be seven years of famine which will affect Egypt, also.

As Pharaoh listens to Joseph, what he says makes sense. It is too bad that in my own nation there have not been men in our government who have had some sense of the future. Our foreign policy since the years before World War II, even from the days of Hitler's rise to power, has been more or less a first-aid program, something rushed in as

an emergency measure. Someone once asked Gladstone what is the measure of a great statesman. He said it is the man who knows the direction God is going for the next fifty years. Well, here in Genesis, Pharaoh is told what is going to happen for the next fourteen years. Our nation could use a man like this, also.

Now, who could take over better than Joseph? Pharaoh recognized that he was a man of ability. Now don't you see how God had been training him in the home of Potiphar? We may wonder why in the world God ever let him go into that home in the first place. Now we realize that he had received quite a bit of training in the home of Potiphar where he had charge of everything the man owned. Now he is going to have charge of everything in the land of Egypt. This is a tremendous transition in his life. He went all the way from the back of the jail to the throne next to that of Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck [[Gen. 41:42](#)].

By the way, that ring had a signet on it. When that was put down in wax, it was just the same as Pharaoh's signature. Pharaoh is making Joseph his agent. He has the right to use the king's signature.

And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt [[Gen. 41:43-45](#)].

I like the name Joe better than I like Zaphnath-paaneah, but that was the name that Pharaoh gave to him. It is a Coptic name, and it means "the revealer of secret things."

And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt [[Gen. 41:46](#)].

We are told Joseph's age here, and we see that he has been in the land of Egypt for thirteen years. We know that two of those years were spent in prison after the episode with the butler and the baker. He probably had been in the prison a year or so before that. So he may have been in the house of Potiphar close to ten years. This gives us some idea of how his life was divided into time periods while he was in the land of Egypt.

After these thirteen years in Egypt, Joseph finds himself in a position which would correspond, I believe, to prime minister. He was second only to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. Have you ever wondered why Pharaoh was so willing to accept him? Primarily, of course, the answer is that God was with him. All the way along we have been seeing that. The hand of God, by His providence, was leading this man. Joseph says himself that the brothers meant it for evil but that God meant it for good. It is wonderful to know that.

There may be another very practical reason for Pharaoh's accepting Joseph so readily. Many scholars hold that the Pharaoh at this particular time in history was one of the Hyksos kings. The Hyksos were not native Egyptians but were Bedouins from the Arabian Desert. They were a nomadic group, and for a period they came in and took over the throne of Egypt. If this is true (and I think it is), Pharaoh was actually closer in nationality to Joseph than to the Egyptians, and this gave him confidence in Joseph. Actually, these Hyksos kings found it a little difficult to find someone in Egypt who would be loyal and faithful to them. Faithfulness was certainly characteristic of Joseph. His confidence that God was moving in his life produced in him a faithfulness to whomever he was attached. He was faithful to his task because he knew that God was in it. A racial bond with Pharaoh may well be a reason that Joseph found such a ready reception with him at this time, and he certainly proved to be faithful to him, as we shall see.

By the way, the Hyksos kings were later expelled from Egypt, which I believe to be the reason that in [Exodus 1:8](#) we read: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." The Pharaoh of the oppression certainly had no fellow-feeling with the Hebrews!

Note that Pharaoh placed a chain about Joseph's neck, which gave him the same authority that Pharaoh had. Also, Pharaoh gave him for a bride the daughter of the priest of On. Her name, Asenath, means "dedicated to Neith (the Egyptian Minerva)." Evidently she came right out of heathenism.

This event in Joseph's life furnishes another parallel in the life of the Lord Jesus. Joseph had a gentile bride, and the Lord Jesus Christ is presently calling out of this world a gentile bride, which we call the church.

And in this same verse there is still another parallel; Joseph stood before Pharaoh when he was thirty years old, and the Lord Jesus began His ministry when He was thirty years of age. So at thirty, Joseph takes up his work in Egypt. During these seven years of plenty, he is gathering into storehouses the abundant produce of the land.

And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same [\[Gen. 41:47-48\]](#).

Notice that he "laid up the food in the cities." He was planning ahead for easy distribution. I remember that during the depression of the 1930s men stood in the lines of the soup kitchens of Chicago and New York, and the lines were blocks long. Although at that time there was an abundance of food, there was a problem of distribution. But Joseph is doing a very practical thing. He is laying up the food in the cities. He is gathering up the surplus, and he is putting it in the cities, ready for distribution.

And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number [\[Gen. 41:49\]](#).

Egypt was the breadbasket of the world. Under Joseph's management, I tell you, it seemed like two or three breadbaskets!

Joseph's Two Sons -- Manasseh And Ephraim (41:50-57)

Now we pause for a little family note --

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him.

And Joseph called the name of the first born Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction [[Gen. 41:50-52](#)].

These boys were born before the famine. He called his first son Manasseh. I'd say a good name for him would be "Amnesia" because it means that God had made Joseph "forget." He was so much involved that he forgot about his father's house. He'd been a homesick boy at first, but he's not anymore.

In the first part of this chapter we saw that Joseph, when he was released from prison, changed his clothes and shaved himself before appearing before Pharaoh. It may seem to you that shaving may not be very important, that only the Gillette Company would be interested in that fact. But to us it has a symbolic interest. The Hebrews wore beards, and when Joseph shaved himself and changed his clothing, it speaks to me of resurrection because he laid aside the old life and began the new life. From that point on, he dresses like an Egyptian; he talks like an Egyptian; he lives like an Egyptian. He says "God made me forget." So he names his son Manasseh -- and you may call him Amnesia if you want to!

The next boy he names Ephraim because that means "fruitful." So you can call this next boy "Ambrosia" if you like. Someone may object that this is free translating. Maybe it is, but if you put those two boys' names into their English counterparts, that is exactly what they are. His boys were Amnesia and Ambrosia. Joseph gave them these names because God had made him forget his father's house and had made him fruitful in the land of Egypt.

And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended [[Gen. 41:53](#)].

The seven years of bountiful crops are over now, and the famine will begin. At this time Joseph is thirty-seven years old. Keep that in mind for the next chapter.

And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do [[Gen. 41:54-55](#)].

May I call your attention to the fact that Joseph is the one who had the bread. There is another parallel here. Jesus Christ said, "I am the Bread of life."

And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands [[Gen. 41:56-57](#)].

Notice that the famine is worldwide.

Chapter 42

THEME: Jacob sends ten sons to Egypt; Simeon left as hostage; nine brothers return home

The dramatic incidents in the life of Joseph are beginning to unfold. The pattern of God in using Joseph to preserve the race during the famine and the removal of Jacob and his sons to Egypt begins to emerge in clear detail. When Joseph was back in that dungeon, he couldn't see all of this. But he believed God. He is a man, who, because of his faith, was always enthusiastic and optimistic. Frankly, I wish my faith would get down far enough into shoe leather so that regardless of what happened, and regardless of what the circumstances are, I could be optimistic. I tell you, it doesn't take much rain or many dark clouds to make me less optimistic than I should be. I'm sure that is true of many of us today.

Joseph is in a unique position. I think you could almost guess what is going to happen. The famine is over all the earth, and all the earth is coming to Egypt to get grain. Guess who's coming to dinner!

The famine forces Jacob to send his ten sons to Egypt to buy food. Why only ten? Why didn't he send Benjamin? It would have killed him to have lost Benjamin.

Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize Joseph. Why not? Well, there are several reasons. First of all, they thought he was dead; so they were not looking for him at all. They never expected to see him again, but he did expect to see them.

Then, we must remember that many years had gone by. He was seventeen when they sold him, and now he is thirty-seven years old, plus however many years the famine has been going on. Let's say it was one year; so they hadn't seen him in twenty-one years. He's almost forty and he is dressed like an Egyptian, speaks and acts like an Egyptian.

But we are getting ahead of our story --

Jacob Sends Ten Sons To Egypt (42:1-22)

Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? [[Gen. 42:1](#)].

They were looking at each other in a doleful way, not knowing where to turn or what to do.

And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die [[Gen. 42:2](#)].

This illustrates faith. A great many people say that faith is so mysterious to them and that they don't know how to believe. I talked to a man who did not want to believe, but his argument was, "Well, how can I believe?" Notice here how Jacob believed. He heard something: "I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." He believed it, believed that it would bring life to them. So he acted upon his belief: "Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die." My friend, that is what saving faith is. Some folk ask, "How can I believe in Jesus?" Can you imagine Jacob standing there before his ten sons and saying, "I've heard that there is corn down in Egypt, but how am I going to believe it?" Well, the way to believe it is to act upon it. The Bible says, ". . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved . . ." ([Acts 16:31](#)). You hear something and you believe it. That is what old Jacob did. That is the way he got corn which brought life to his family. And the way you and I get eternal life is through faith in Christ.

And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him [[Gen. 42:3-4](#)].

Suppose mischief befalls the other ten boys, then what? Well, for one thing they are older. But if you want to know the truth, it wouldn't hurt Jacob as much as to lose Benjamin. Benjamin and Joseph were Rachel's boys, and Rachel was the wife he had deeply loved. And now he sends out all ten and keeps only Benjamin with him.

And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan [[Gen. 42:5](#)].

Now we come to this dramatic moment --

And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth [[Gen. 42:6](#)].

Joseph has been watching for them. He knew they would have to come. There had been delegations there from all over the inhabited earth of that day. The famine was worldwide. So he watches, and lo and behold, here come the ten men. They all bow down before him. They got right down on their faces before Joseph. You wonder how he felt. By the way, what do you think of? Here is the literal fulfillment of the dreams of Joseph. Do you remember how he had dreamed as a boy that all the sheaves bowed down to his sheaf? Here it is taking place -- all his older brothers are down on their faces before him.

And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto

them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him [[Gen. 42:7-8](#)].

Do you know why he treated them roughly? He is testing them. We will find that he is going to test them all the way through. He is going to ask them some penetrating questions.

And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies [[Gen. 42:9-11](#)].

Believe me, Joseph is pouring it on --

And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not [[Gen. 42:12-13](#)].

He is trying to get as much information as he can about his family without letting them know who he is. He accuses them of being spies.

There are only ten men there before him. They confess that they are really twelve and that one is home with their father. The other "is not" is what they think. In other words, they consider Joseph dead, but there he is standing before them!

Now for the third time Joseph accuses them of being spies.

And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies:

Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and he shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies [[Gen. 42:14-16](#)].

Joseph is attempting to make contact with his youngest brother. These men are really half-brothers of his, but Benjamin is his full-brother, and he wants to see him. This is the way he attempts to accomplish this.

And he put them all together into ward three days [[Gen. 42:17](#)].

He locked them up in the town bastille.

Things look bad for them now, and they wonder what is going to happen.

And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God [[Gen. 42:18](#)].

If there was anything that should have given the brothers an inkling of an idea who Joseph was, this statement was it. He says, "I fear God." Apparently in that day there were people other than just Jacob and his family who knew God. They knew that the way to God was by sacrifice. However, this sort of thing probably would not have excited the interest of these brethren. Maybe it even made them a little suspicious of this man. At least he gave a testimony for God. I want you to note that Joseph never misses an opportunity to give a testimony for God. Certainly he is giving one here. He always gives God the glory as the One who is directing his life. At least the statement that he fears God should have encouraged the brothers to believe that they would be treated justly at his hand.

If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:

But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so [[Gen. 42:19-20](#)].

These brothers are men, some of them being over fifty years old, and now they find themselves in a real predicament. They are being dealt with by one who fears God, but they are afraid because they don't know what he is going to do. Joseph makes the pretext of testing them to see whether they are true men, but what he really wants is for his younger brother to come the next time.

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us [[Gen. 42:21](#)].

What is taking place here is quite interesting. They are speaking in Hebrew, and Joseph can understand them. Joseph had been speaking to them through an interpreter. He didn't need to, but he did because he is posing as an Egyptian. They are making a real confession of their guilt.

And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required [[Gen. 42:22](#)].

They feel that what is happening to them is the vengeance of God upon them for the way they treated Joseph.

Simeon Left As Hostage (42:23-28)

And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes [[Gen. 42:23-24](#)].

They say that this evil thing is coming upon them because of the evil they had done to Joseph. They are really repentant now. Joseph hears every bit of it, and he is moved toward them. He would love to walk up to them, throw his arms around each one of them, and call them "brother." But he dares not do it because he would never get Benjamin there.

He gives them a real test now. They must leave one of the brothers, and it is Simeon who is to stay. Joseph was so moved, so emotionally charged by all this that he had to weep. But he goes aside and washes his face; then comes in again as if nothing has happened.

I don't have any idea why they chose Simeon. I take it that while Joseph was gone out of the room, his brothers made the choice for Simeon to stay, and Joseph accepted that choice.

Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provisions for the way: and thus did he unto them [[Gen. 42:25](#)].

He just couldn't take their money. So he not only gave them back their payment for the grain, but he gave them food for the trip home.

And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth.

And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us? [[Gen. 42:26-28](#)].

They feel that this is the judgment of God upon them. Ordinarily it would have been good news and a wonderful thing to have your money returned to you! Let me ask you this: Wouldn't you like to go down to your favorite supermarket to do your weekend grocery shopping, load up several of those great big carts and buy for your whole family; then wouldn't you like to open up your grocery sack at home and find that they had given you back all of the money you had paid for the groceries? Do you think that would be bad news to you? Especially, would it worry you if you learned that the grocer was giving this to you as a gift from him? Don't we all agree that under ordinary circumstances that would be good news? We would actually take it as an encouragement.

Well, it wasn't that for these men. They already feel that they are in hot water with this hard-boiled ruler down there in Egypt who has made it so difficult for them. This only adds to their concern.

We may wonder why they didn't go back to Egypt immediately. What would you have done under the circumstances? I think they feared they would really be in hot water had they gone back. Then this man would accuse them of stealing the money. They are not taking any chances. They are going on home, intending to bring the money back when they return.

Nine Brothers Return Home (42:29-38)

And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying,

The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies:

We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone:

And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land [[Gen. 42:29-34](#)].

Remember that they have left Simeon down there in Egypt.

And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid [[Gen. 42:35](#)].

They thought it was a trick, of course.

And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me [[Gen. 42:36](#)].

Poor old Jacob! He's not the cocky individual we once knew, nor is he quite the man of faith that we shall see a little later. But he is growing. He is not bragging now but is very pessimistic. He says, "All these things are against me." His son, Joseph, would not have said such a thing, but Jacob is saying it. Joseph would have said the same thing that Paul wrote so many years later: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" ([Rom. 8:28](#)). "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ" ([Phil. 1:6](#)).

And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave [[Gen. 42:37-38](#)].

Jacob's life was wrapped up in the life of this boy Benjamin. You see, Joseph was his favorite because he was the firstborn of his lovely Rachel. Now Joseph is gone, which is a heartbreak to him. Now he faces the chance that he may lose this other son of Rachel,

and he says that if this takes place he will die. Very candidly, he would have. His life was absolutely tied up in the life of Benjamin. He is the son of his right hand. He is the walking stick for Jacob. Jacob leans on him. That is what he has been doing these past years; so Jacob says that he will not let him go down to Egypt. In the meantime, poor Simeon is down there cooling his heels in jail!

Chapter 43

THEME: Jacob sends his sons to Egypt; the brothers are entertained in Joseph's home

Due to the seriousness of the famine, the sons of Jacob are forced to return with Benjamin to Egypt where they again have an audience with Joseph and present Benjamin. Joseph does not make himself known unto them at this time.

This is doubtless the most dramatic chapter in the Book of Genesis. I know of nothing that is quite as moving as the appearance of Benjamin before Joseph. The thing that brings them down to the land again is the seriousness of the famine. If the famine had lifted, I think Simeon would have spent the rest of his life in jail down in the land of Egypt, at least until Joseph released him.

Jacob Sends His Sons To Egypt (43:1-15)

And the famine was sore in the land.

And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn, which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food [[Gen. 43:1-2](#)].

Jacob realized they would starve to death if they didn't go down to Egypt again.

And Judah spake unto him saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food:

But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you [[Gen. 43:3-5](#)].

"The man" is their brother Joseph, but they do not know it. He had presented to them a cut-and-dried proposition, and they knew he meant it. Judah tells his father very definitely, "If we go down there, we must have Benjamin with us. You wouldn't send him before, but there is no use going if he is not with us this time because the man won't see us."

And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?

And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we

certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down? [[Gen. 43:6-7](#)].

Poor old Jacob is really frustrated. He says, "Why in the world did you tell the man in the first place that you even had another brother?" He doesn't realize that Joseph knew it anyway. But Jacob wishes his sons had kept their mouths shut.

And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones.

I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever [[Gen. 43:8-9](#)].

The brothers were really quite reasonable in their answer to their father. They told him that they hadn't intended to tell "the man" everything but that he kept probing them. He was going to get his information and wouldn't stop until he did -- we know that. Then Judah comes forward as a surety for Benjamin.

Friend, you and I have a Surety today, and He came from the tribe of Judah. The Lord Jesus took my place and became my Shepherd, took my place and took my penalty. I was not able to meet His standard. I was not able to come up to His level. But the Lord Jesus stepped in and became my Surety and gave His life for me. What a picture of Christ we have here!

For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time [[Gen. 43:10](#)].

Judah says, "If you had let Benjamin go, we would have been there and back home by this time."

And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds [[Gen. 43:11](#)].

You will notice here that the thing they lacked was grain. They lacked bread, the staff of life. Apparently they had honey, nuts, and spices. So Jacob says they should send the man a gift. "Let's get on the sweet side of him" is actually what he is saying with the gift.

And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight:

Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:

And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved [[Gen. 43:12-14](#)].

So old Jacob relinquishes Benjamin and lets him go along with his older brothers.

Now the dramatic moment comes when they stand again before Joseph.

And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph [[Gen. 43:15](#)].

You can well imagine Joseph's emotion as his eye singled out Benjamin!

Joseph Entertains His Brothers (43:16-34)

And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon.

And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house [[Gen. 43:16-17](#)].

The reason for Joseph's inviting them to his home is obvious. He wants to talk with them in the privacy of his own home.

And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses [[Gen. 43:18](#)].

These men are really panicky now. They can't imagine him inviting them to his home for any good purpose. He had dealt with them so harshly before, and now he is inviting them to lunch!

Again, here is something that under ordinary circumstances would be something to brag about. Wouldn't you brag if the President of the United States had invited you to the Blue Room, or, better yet, the dining room for dinner? You would think it was a wonderful privilege. Yet, for these men, such a privilege brings no joy whatsoever. You see, they have a guilt complex. They feel guilty about everything that happens because they are the ones who sold their brother. Guilt changes joy into misery. In their fears, they wonder and begin to speculate. Could this man be plotting to take them as slaves because of the money in the sacks? Well, they had not hesitated to make a slave of Joseph when they sold him to the Ishmeelites for slavery in Egypt.

And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house.

And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:

And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand.

And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks [[Gen. 43:19-22](#)].

They are beginning to apologize, explain, and plead. They even appeal to this man who is conducting them to Joseph's home -- who evidently was an official.

And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them [[Gen. 43:23](#)].

Apparently, this man, through the testimony of Joseph, had come to a knowledge of the living and true God. I think that Joseph had at least partially let him in on what was taking place. When he said, "I had your money," I imagine that frightened the brothers all the more.

And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender [[Gen. 43:24](#)].

Here we see the custom of footwashing again. We saw it in the life of Abraham and then again down in the city of Sodom. It was the custom of that day.

And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth [[Gen. 43:25-26](#)].

Remember that old Jacob had told his sons to take a present to "the man." Notice that they "bowed themselves to him to the earth." Again the boyhood dreams of Joseph are being fulfilled.

And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? [[Gen. 43:27](#)].

This is a dramatic moment! Joseph is probably seated, not necessarily on a throne, but on an elevation of prominence, as his brothers bow before him. When they stand to their feet, Joseph looks them right in the eye, and they look at him. Joseph asks, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he still alive?" You see, Joseph is acutely interested because he is his father, also.

And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance [[Gen. 43:28](#)].

Here they go down on their faces again. I would love to have a picture of this, wouldn't you? Benjamin is with them, and he goes down on his face, too.

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother, Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son [[Gen. 43:29](#)].

Joseph looks at his brother Benjamin, "his mother's son." The others are his half-brothers, but this boy is his full-brother, his mother's son. He asks, "Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me?" I suppose the brothers nodded. Joseph said to Benjamin, "God be gracious unto thee, my son." What a dramatic moment! And Joseph can't contain his emotion --

And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother:
and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber,
and wept there [[Gen. 43:30](#)].

"His bowels did yearn upon his brother" -- that is, he was deeply moved, and his heart went out to him. I suppose he said to his brothers, "Excuse me for a moment -- someone wants me on the telephone," and he got out of the room as quickly as he could. He went into his own private quarters and he wept. After all these years, he sees his own brother Benjamin. It has been about twenty-two years. Joseph is almost forty now, and Benjamin is a young man.

And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and
said, Set on bread [[Gen. 43:31](#)].

This is a marvelous, wonderful picture of something that is yet to be fulfilled. I hope that you will see this. The prophet Zechariah tells us that Jesus Christ is going to make Himself known unto His brethren someday. They are going to ask Him about the piercing of His side and the nail prints in His hands. He is going to say to them in that day, "These I received in the house of My friends." Then they will recognize Him, and they will weep. He is the One who has provided salvation for them. He is the One who gave His life for their redemption. This is going to take place when the Lord Jesus comes back to the earth. He will be revealed to His brethren, the nation Israel. There will be a remnant there who will know Him. Many of His brethren did not believe on Him when He came the first time, but at that time they are going to know Him.

Likewise, the brothers of Joseph are the ones who delivered him into slavery. They sold him, got rid of him. But now he is going to make himself known to his brethren. Someday our Lord Jesus Christ is going to do just that.

My Christian friend, beware of anti-Semitism. Regardless of how blind the nation of Israel is or what they engage in today, and regardless if they are not all lovely people, it is still true that they are the brethren of our Lord. There is coming the day when He is going to make Himself known to them. It is a family affair. We had better let His family alone. No real Christian can engage in anti-Semitism.

After Joseph had gone to his private quarters to weep, he regained control of his emotions, washed his face, and returned to his brothers. He said, "Let's eat."

And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves,
and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves:
because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews: for
that is an abomination unto the Egyptians [[Gen. 43:32](#)].

There are several things about this meal that the brothers would have noticed had they not been so frightened. The first thing is that Joseph did not eat with the Egyptians. The Egyptians ate alone. Joseph was separate from them. The brothers may have thought this was simply because he was the brass, the head man in this particular place.

Now here is something else --

And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another [[Gen. 43:33](#)].

Joseph arranged the place cards, and he put Reuben in his proper place, he put Benjamin in his proper place, and all the brothers were in their right order, according to their ages. They looked at each other in amazement and wondered how he knew all that.

And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him [[Gen. 43:34](#)].

Also notice that he served their places. I wish our Authorized Version had used another word here instead of "messes" because that sounds messy, but of course it means portions. And again, he just could not refrain from showing his affection for his own brother Benjamin, so that he gave him five times as much. Now that young man had been through a famine, and this was his first real meal for a long time.

"And they drank, and were merry with him." It was a glorious affair. And what a wonderful day it will be when Joseph finally reveals himself to his brethren.

Chapter 44

THEME: Joseph sends his brothers home; Judah volunteers to take Benjamin's place

Again, we have a wonderful and dramatic chapter before us. Joseph has something else up his sleeve when he sends his brothers away with the grain. He tests his brothers relative to their relationship and their affection to Benjamin and their father. Remember, they had sold him into slavery. Have they changed? Will they be willing to let Benjamin go into slavery to save themselves? He needs to satisfy his mind in this regard before he makes himself known to them. The test he uses here would give him absolute proof that his brothers would not repeat the episode that he had experienced at their hands.

Judah acts as the spokesman for the group, and he is brought into a wonderful picture here. He is willing to take the place of Benjamin, and his eloquent defense of Benjamin is one of the most moving passages in the Bible.

Joseph Sends Brothers Home (44:1-15)

And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when

thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing [[Gen. 44:1-5](#)].

Joseph sends them away, and the brothers start out, thinking everything is all right. They have no idea of the cup in the sack of Benjamin. But the steward of Joseph's house comes after them with specific instructions. When the brothers get out a little way, they are overtaken. Here comes a whole troop after them, and they are accused of taking the cup belonging to Joseph.

And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing [[Gen. 44:6-7](#)].

Note that the steward says that Joseph uses this cup for "divining." Remember that Joseph was a prophet, and he was able to foretell the future. We know that is so because he interpreted the dreams of the baker, the butler, and of Pharaoh. He may have used this cup, or maybe that was part of the ruse that he used. We must understand that his gift of prophecy was a gift that God had given him, and this was before there was any written revelation. We are not to get a cup and look at tea leaves, nor are we to watch the horoscope -- that is all absolute nonsense. It reveals the sad spiritual condition of people today when they turn to that sort of thing. Joseph had a gift. It was not in the cup. His gift was from God.

Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen [[Gen. 44:8-9](#)].

They were so sure that none of them had the cup.

And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.

And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack [[Gen. 44:10-12](#)].

Of course, Joseph had instructed his steward to put the cup in Benjamin's sack.

Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city [[Gen. 44:13](#)].

They "rent" or tore their clothes as a gesture of extreme distress. They all turned around to go back. They are not going home without Benjamin, you may be sure of that. Here they fall on the ground before Joseph again. This time it is in dismay and in agony --

And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? [[Gen. 44:14-15](#)].

Judah Volunteers To Take Benjamin's Place (44:16-34)

Judah comes to the front, and the nobility of this man really stands out now. Remember it is from the tribe of Judah that the Saviour is to come. This man makes one of the finest speeches ever recorded. He makes a full confession that it is because of their sin that this has come upon them.

And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.

And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father [[Gen. 44:16-17](#)].

Joseph wants to test them now in regard to their love for their brother. He says that Benjamin is the guilty one; so it is Benjamin who must stay. They had sold him into slavery; now he says, "Just leave Benjamin here, and he can be my slave. He is the guilty one. The rest of you can go home." Now listen to Judah --

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh [[Gen. 44:18](#)].

You can see the position which Joseph occupies in Egypt.

My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?

And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

And thou saidst unto thy servant, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father,
we told him the words of my lord.

And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food.

And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with
us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face,
except our youngest brother be with us.

And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare
me two sons:

And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in
pieces; and I saw him not since:

And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall
bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave [[Gen. 44:19-29](#)].

Judah here in this statement is recounting what has happened and the feelings of their father. Actually, the father had been deceived, and Joseph can see that now. He now knows exactly what the brothers told their father had happened to him so long ago. I believe that this is the first time any one of them has said that much. They had said previously that he "was not," meaning that he was dead.

We can see something else. Jacob is growing in grace, but he hasn't arrived. Instead of trusting the Lord, he is leaning on this boy Benjamin. If anything had happened to Benjamin, it would have killed him -- he would have gone down into his grave, sorrowing.

There are Christians today who reveal a very wonderful faith in God at the time when death comes to a loved one. Others actually collapse when this happens. I don't care how much you love a member of your family, friend, if you both are children of God, you know you are going to see each other again someday. The one walking by faith is not going to collapse at a time like that. Therefore, we can recognize that Jacob has not yet arrived. Although he is growing in grace, he still does not have a complete trust in God.

Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad
be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us,
that he will die; and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of
thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave [[Gen. 44:30-31](#)].

You notice the concern that Judah has here for old Jacob. Judah is the spokesman for the group. I think any one of the other brothers would have made this same statement.

For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying,
If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my
father for ever.

Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad
a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?
lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father [[Gen. 44:32-34](#)].

Again, Judah is the spokesman for the group, and any one of them would have offered himself. Joseph tests his brothers, and they all pass the test. Rather than to see Benjamin go into slavery, they are willing to take his place.

My friend, later on in history there came One in the line of Judah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who bore the penalty for the guilty. ". . . God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" ([Rom. 5:8](#)). Christ took the place of the guilty.

Chapter 45

THEME: Joseph reveals his identity; Joseph invites his family to Egypt

The story from the previous chapters continues right on in the chapter before us. Joseph reveals himself to his brethren and identifies himself with them.

Joseph Reveals His Identity (45:1-8)

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren [[Gen. 45:1](#)].

Joseph clears the room.

And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard [[Gen. 45:2](#)].

This time Joseph could not get out of the room. He just breaks down and begins to weep. No one knows why except Joseph. His own brethren at this time do not know, and the servants who are there do not know. Now there is no further reason for Joseph to conceal his identity from them, as he has fully tested his brethren.

Let me repeat that the day is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to make Himself known unto His brethren, the Jews. When He came the first time, "he came unto his own, and his own received him not" ([John 1:11](#)). In fact, they delivered Him up to be crucified. But when He comes the second time, He will make Himself known to His own people. "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" ([Zech. 13:6](#)). Christ will make Himself known to His brethren. And "in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" ([Zech. 13:1](#)). It will be a family affair between the Lord Jesus and His brethren. The episode of Joseph revealing himself to his brothers gives us a little inkling of how wonderful that day of Christ's revelation will be.

Joseph is so charged with emotion that he can't contain himself. In the house of Pharaoh they can hear the weeping. They can't understand what is happening over at Joseph's house.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph: doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence [[Gen. 45:3](#)].

"Troubled" in our translation is really not strong enough. The brothers were terrified at his presence. I tell you, if you think they were afraid before, they were really terrified now. It had been close to twenty-five years since they had seen him when they sold him to the Ishmaelites, and they are sure that now he will want to get his revenge. They are too shocked and frightened to speak.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt [[Gen. 45:4](#)].

"I'm your brother." Here is a dramatic moment! Can you imagine how they feel? Notice the reaction of Joseph here. He is not angry, and he does not seek revenge. That would be the normal, human reaction. Then why doesn't he seek revenge?

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life [[Gen. 45:5](#)].

You see, the thing that Joseph could see in all of this was that God had permitted it for a purpose. God was moving in his life.

For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt [[Gen. 45:6-8](#)].

If you and I could see the hand of God in our lives, would we become angry and seek revenge? I don't think we would. Again this man gives the glory to God.

Joseph was seventeen when he was brought into Egypt. He was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh. There had been seven years of plenty and now there have passed two years of famine. So Joseph is thirty-nine years old and has been living in the land of Egypt for twenty-two years. He sees the hand of God in all of this.

Joseph Invites His Family To Egypt (45:9-28)

Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty [[Gen. 45:9-11](#)].

Jacob and his family could not have survived had they stayed in the land of Palestine at this particular time. They would have perished. Joseph wants to bring them down to the land of Goshen which is actually the best part of Egypt. It is in that land that God is going to make them a nation, sheltered from the rest of the world. The lives of the brothers revealed that they needed to get out of the land of Canaan.

And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you [[Gen. 45:12](#)].

I think that they stood there absolutely spellbound and were down on their faces and then up again and that they had absolutely nothing to say as they listened to Joseph speaking words that seemed unbelievable -- they would have been unbelievable but Joseph was right there before them.

And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck [[Gen. 45:13-14](#)].

This is a tender scene between these two full-brothers. Joseph and Benjamin are both marvelous men.

Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him [[Gen. 45:15](#)].

The other brothers were stunned, but now they begin to recover their senses, and they have quite a talk.

And then the news begins to be spread abroad.

And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants [[Gen. 45:16](#)].

There was all this noise in the house of Joseph, and the people could hear it. Pharaoh wanted to know what was going on, and I suppose he asked one of the servants from Joseph's house what it all meant. The servant probably said, "Well, you know those eleven men who came down from Canaan -- they're Joseph's brothers!" It delighted Pharaoh. Why would it delight him? Remember that Pharaoh was probably a Hyksos king and of the same racial strain as Joseph and his family. He hadn't been able to trust the Egyptians too much and was pleased with Joseph's faithfulness; so he was delighted that there were going to be more like him.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan;

And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come [[Gen. 45:17-19](#)].

Notice that Pharaoh orders wagons to be sent. The wheel was quite an invention, and these men from Canaan were not using wagons yet, but the Egyptians were more advanced.

Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours [[Gen. 45:20](#)].

"You won't need to bring anything extra; we'll furnish everything you need."

And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.

And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the goods things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father.

And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not [[Gen. 45:21-26](#)].

He just could not believe it was true.

And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived [[Gen. 45:27](#)].

Finally old Jacob was convinced, and he began to exhibit some enthusiasm.

And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die [[Gen. 45:28](#)].

What thrilling developments we are seeing here! The prospect of seeing Joseph certainly influenced Jacob to make the decision to go down to Egypt. Do you think that he intended to remain in Egypt? I don't think so. I think he intended to pay a brief visit to his son and then return back home as soon as the famine was over. But he never returned to

Canaan except for a burial, his own. He died in the land of Egypt. Although his whole family lived there, he was buried in the land of Canaan.

Chapter 46

THEME: Jacob and family move to Egypt; Jacob and Joseph reunited

Jacob probably thought he was going to Egypt for only a few years, and even then it was with some reluctance and hesitation that he consented going there. God had instructed Abraham to stay out of Egypt, and Abraham had been in trouble down there. God had said the same thing to Isaac. So now the question is, should Jacob go down into the land of Egypt? He needs a little more encouragement than the invitation from his son Joseph or even from Pharaoh. He needs to have a green light from God.

Jacob And Family Move To Egypt (46:1-28)

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac [[Gen. 46:1](#)].

Here is the amazing thing: he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. The first time he left that land going to the land of Haran, he had come to Bethel. Was he looking for God? No, he thought he had run away from Him. He wasn't seeking the mind of God at all, nor was he asking for His leading. What a contrast there is between young Jacob and the servant of Abraham. The servant of Abraham never took a step without looking to God, but Jacob didn't think that he needed God in his life at all. It took a long time for him to learn that was not the proper way to go through life.

How many Christians today go through the entire week and leave God pretty much out of their program. They make their own decisions and do what they want to do. Then they come to church on Sunday, are very religious and are willing to do God's will -- they think God's will for them is merely to go to church and maybe teach a Sunday school class. Then they tell God good-bye on Sunday night. The rest of the week God is not in the picture for them.

This man Jacob, for most of his life, had not been looking to God, but now, as he comes to Beersheba, he offers sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

Now God is going to be gracious and appear to him --

And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation [[Gen. 46:2-3](#)].

Now God is promising that He will make of Jacob a great nation down in the land of Egypt. You may be wondering if God did that. We find the answer in the next book of the Bible: "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" ([Exod. 1:7](#)). There was

a real population explosion of Israelites in the land of Egypt. What is the explanation of that? God is making good His promise to Jacob. "I am God, the God of thy Father: fear not to go down into Egypt: for I will there make of thee a great nation." God made good that which He promised to him.

I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him [[Gen. 46:4-5](#)].

Pharaoh, you recall, had sent these wagons from Egypt. They put Jacob in one of the wagons, and off they go.

The life of Jacob can be divided into three geographical locations: the land of Haran, the land of Canaan, and the land of Egypt. These are not only geographical areas, but they denote three spiritual levels. Jacob left the land with just a staff. When he came into Haran, he was God's man living in the flesh. He came out of Haran, running. He was running away from his father-in-law and was afraid to meet his own brother Esau. Then in the land of Canaan Jacob had his wrestling match, but he is God's man who is fighting in his own strength. Now he is going to Egypt. He is not walking in his own strength, and he is not running away anymore. He is now walking by faith.

Although Joseph is prominent in this section of Genesis, be sure to mark the evidences of the spiritual man of faith in the life of Jacob. Jacob has become the man that God wanted him to be, and only God can make this kind of man.

Let me state this again. Jacob's life in Haran typifies the man of God who is living in the flesh. Jacob's life in the land of Canaan typifies the man of God who is fighting in his own strength. Jacob's life in Egypt typifies the man of God who is walking by faith.

This, I believe, is true also for a great many of us today. There was that time in our lives when we came in contact with the gospel, the Word of God, and we turned to Him. Then there was that period of struggle when we thought we could live our lives in our own strength. Perhaps that lasted for years. Then there came the time when we did grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and began to walk by faith.

And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt [[Gen. 46:6-7](#)].

Because of the famine, Jacob had to take everyone -- children and grandchildren. And all of their livestock had to go with them since none could have survived the famine.

The following verses give the genealogy of Jacob. It is very important because it is the genealogy which will lead to Jesus Christ and will be followed through the rest of the Bible. After a list of all of Jacob's descendants, we read this:

All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six [[Gen. 46:26](#)].

From Jacob there were sixty-six people who came with him from Canaan into Egypt. Of course, Joseph and his family were already in Egypt --

And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten [[Gen. 46:27](#)].

This brought the total household of Jacob to seventy souls.

Notice that each son of Jacob and his offspring are listed by name. Why are these lists of names given to us in the Scriptures? Doesn't God have more important information to give to us? My friend, there is nothing more important than our Lord Jesus Christ, and this is the genealogy that leads to Him. We will find some of these names in the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew, at the beginning of the New Testament. Again, we will find some of these names in the genealogy given to us in Luke, chapter 3. These lists of names are important for that reason.

There is another reason, and it is very personal. Have you heard of the Lamb's Book of Life? The question is: Is your name written there? Just as you got into the line of Adam (and we all are in that line), you get into the line of Christ -- that is, by birth. But in the case of the Lamb's Book of Life, you get there by the new birth which comes about by receiving Christ as your personal Savior. When you do that, you become a child of God.

How important are you? Well, I don't know you -- probably have never heard of you -- but God knows you. In fact, He has numbered the very hairs of your head! He knows you better than anyone else knows you. He knows you and loves you more than your mother ever did -- I don't imagine that she ever counted the hairs of your head! God did. God knows you personally.

In Jacob's genealogy there are names that mean nothing to me. In watching the news on television, I saw the crowd of young folk at a rock festival, a mob of about two hundred thousand dirty, filthy folk. They may have needed a bath to begin with, but it had just rained, and they were covered with mud. As I looked at them, I thought, God knows each one of them, and God loves each one. They are not thinking of Him, but each one is precious in God's sight, and Christ died for each one. My friend, here you are in the midst of a great population explosion with literally millions of people around you, yet you are an individual to God. And the names listed in Jacob's genealogy are people whom I don't know. Candidly, I'm not interested in them. But God is. He delighted in putting their names down because they were His. This again causes me to ask you the question: Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

Now here comes Jacob with all of his family to the land of Egypt.

And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen [[Gen. 46:28](#)].

Jacob And Joseph Reunited (46:29-34)

What a picture we have here --

And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while [[Gen. 46:29](#)].

Joseph fell on the neck of his father and embraced him, and he wept there. The Word of God says it was a good while. I don't know how long a "good while" is, but it does mean that it wasn't just a brisk handshake that had no meaning. The emotion was quite real. Oh, what a marvelous meeting this was!

And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive [[Gen. 46:30](#)].

What a joy this was to old Jacob! Frankly, friend, I think that Jacob was an old man about ready to die. I believe he barely made this trip, but God sustained him. We will find that he is permitted to live for a few years in the land of Egypt. Israel and Joseph have these last years together. Notice that Jacob is now "the child of God who lives by faith." Therefore, he is called by his name Israel.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me;

And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation?

That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers; that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians [[Gen. 46:31-34](#)].

They had the same problem in Egypt in that day as we had in the western part of the United States. I remember when I was a boy in West Texas that, if a man tried to raise sheep in that area, he was in trouble. He found he didn't have any friends at all, and I mean he was in real trouble. Just so, the Egyptians didn't care for shepherds.

It is interesting that the Word of God has had so much to say about shepherds. These people were shepherds who raised their own sheep, and they still do in the land of Israel. "Shepherd" is the figure of speech which is used to describe our Lord. He is the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. He is the Great Shepherd of His sheep who watches over them today. He is the Chief Shepherd who is yet to appear. He calls Himself the Shepherd.

And, my friend, He is an abomination to the world. He is not received today. I am speaking of the real Jesus Christ. Liberalism has concocted a Jesus whom the world will

accept. They have made an idol that doesn't even look like the Lord Jesus of the Bible. The one they talk about is not virgin-born; he never performed miracles; he did not die for the sins of the world; and he was not raised bodily from the dead. The Jesus of the liberal never lived. There is no record of a Jesus like that. The only One we have records of was virgin-born, performed miracles, died for the sins of the world, and arose bodily from the grave. That is the Shepherd whom the world doesn't like. He is still an abomination to the world.

Shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. Joseph tells his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds and that they raise cattle. Actually, they had both cattle and sheep. We will find later that Pharaoh will give them the land of Goshen and will ask them to take care of his sheep so that the children of Israel became the shepherds in the land of Egypt.

It is really quite wonderful to see that now the family of Jacob is living in the land of Goshen. This is to be their home for a long time. After the death of Joseph, they will become slaves in the land of Egypt, but God will be with them through all that time. They will become a great nation down there, and then God will lead them out under Moses.

There is no record that God ever appeared to Joseph, yet we certainly see the providence of God in the life of Joseph. It is obvious to us now that he had to come ahead to prepare the way so that the entire family of Jacob could survive in the land of Egypt.

Chapter 47

THEME: Joseph presents father and brothers to Pharaoh; Joseph promises Jacob burial in Canaan

We have seen how Jacob and all his family have arrived in the land of Egypt. Joseph, as a move of strategy, brought them into the land of Goshen. This actually was the richest land in that day, but right now they are in the midst of a famine and no land is very valuable to the owner at this particular time.

We are going to find that this is the best chapter in the life of Jacob so far. Jacob doesn't appear in a good light when we first meet him in Scripture. In fact, not until he makes his trip to Egypt do we begin to see that he has become a man of faith. This chapter, more than any other, reveals that.

The famine becomes more intense as it draws to an end. Although all the people of the world are involved in this, Canaan and Egypt are the lands which are mentioned because they are the particular areas in the development of the story which is told to us here.

Joseph Presents Father And Brothers To Pharaoh (47:1-26)

Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen [[Gen. 47:1](#)].

Joseph is going to present his father and his brothers to the Pharaoh of Egypt. He put them in the land of Goshen before he asked for a place for them. You can see the strategy

in that. If they were already there, Pharaoh would be more apt to give them that land. After all, they would already be moved in and have unpacked their goods.

And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers [[Gen. 47:2-3](#)].

We saw that shepherds and cattlemen didn't get along in those days. Egyptians just didn't care for shepherds, neither did they care for shepherding. So that opened up an opportunity for the children of Israel to do something that the Egyptians would not want to do.

They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee:

The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle [[Gen. 47:4-6](#)].

Since shepherding was not popular for the Egyptians, Pharaoh needed someone to care for his cattle.

Now Joseph presents his own father to Pharaoh, and this is really quite remarkable. I want you to notice that Jacob now stands in the best light in which we've ever seen him during our study of him.

And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh [[Gen. 47:7](#)].

Notice that it is Jacob who is blessing Pharaoh. He is beginning to live up to his name. He is a witness for God now. The lesser is always blessed of the greater, and Jacob blesses Pharaoh as a witness for God.

And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? [[Gen. 47:8](#)].

At this point, if Jacob were living by that old nature which controlled him at the beginning, he would have said, "Well, Pharaoh, I am 130 years old, and I want to tell you what I have accomplished in my lifetime. I would like to tell you how I outsmarted my brother when I was a young fellow and how I became rich by outsmarting my father-in-law." And he could have bragged about his family -- "I've got twelve sons. . . ." He could have gone on and on. But Jacob is a different man now. Listen to him --

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the

days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage [[Gen. 47:9](#)].

First of all, notice that he was 130 years old when he came down to the land of Egypt, and he will be 147 years old when he dies. Therefore, he will spend 17 years in the land of Egypt. I imagine that he was right on the verge of death -- one foot in the grave and the other foot on a banana peel -- when he came down to Egypt. But the joy of finding Joseph alive and of being with him in Egypt prolonged his life 17 years.

Again, this audience with Pharaoh is an opportunity for the old man to boast, but notice how changed this man Jacob is. He says that he is 130 years old and his life is really nothing to brag about. "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." He doesn't brag about pulling a trick on his old father. Instead, he says he doesn't measure up to his fathers. I "have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." Isn't this a changed man? It doesn't sound like the old Jacob, does it? He's giving glory to God for his life, and he is making no boast that he has accomplished a great deal.

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh [[Gen. 47:10](#)].

Frankly, my feeling is that Jacob has arrived. What an opportunity he has to boast, but he doesn't take advantage of it. Someone else might have thought, Pharaoh is a great ruler, but I want him to know that I was a pretty big man up yonder in the land of Canaan! But Jacob doesn't brag -- he is just a sinner, saved by the grace of God.

In our day we hear so much boasting on the part of many Christians. Sometimes in our own circles, we attempt to applaud certain men for what they have done. We talk about how great they are. Well, if we all told the truth, we would say that we are just a bunch of sinners and we haven't anything to brag about except a wonderful Savior who has been gracious and patient with us down through the years. He is all any of us have to boast about.

Neither can we say that we are superior to our fathers. A friend of mine, who is now a seminary professor, told me how ashamed he had been of his dad. When he first went off to college, his dad was coming to that college to speak because he was a preacher and a Bible teacher. My friend said he was so ashamed of his dad that he wouldn't even go to the meeting where he spoke. He pretended to be sick so he would not have to go. He said, "I was so ashamed of him that I didn't want to be known as his son!" He spent four years in college and then went into the business world for a couple of years. He said, "I had a rough time, and I changed my thinking about my dad. I had thought he was pretty stupid, but I realized that he had supported his family and had been an excellent Bible teacher. After I had experienced some rough times in the business world, I came home, and my, how my dad had improved! No one has ever learned as much as my dad had learned during those brief years I had been away from home!" He came to the conclusion that his dad was a lot smarter than he had thought him to be. Isn't that same kind of story true of many of us? But it is not true of Jacob here. He takes a humble place because he is a changed man now.

And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded [[Gen. 47:11](#)].

The land of Rameses is the land of Goshen.

And Joseph nourished his father and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine [[Gen. 47:12-13](#)].

The reason that only Egypt and Canaan are mentioned is because they are the two geographical locations which are involved in our story. If Jacob had remained in Canaan with his family, they would have perished. Grain had been stored in the land of Egypt, but the land is not producing grain anymore. Evidently the famine has spread all over Africa, because the Nile River is not overflowing, which is so necessary for Egypt's crop production.

And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house [[Gen. 47:14](#)].

We are coming now to something for which Joseph has been criticized. People say he took advantage of poverty and he bought up the land. In other words, he closed in on the mortgages and bought the land. I feel that this is an unfair criticism of Joseph. To begin with, he is the agent of Pharaoh. None of this is for himself; he is making no effort to enrich himself. He was not crooked in any sense of the word. He did not gain personally because of the famine.

An illustration of this is the scarcity of and demand for uranium during wartime in my own country. When some men found that they had uranium in their properties -- especially in Arizona -- they were paid handsome sums for their land. Were they taking advantage of their government? I don't think so. The law of supply and demand was in operation.

It seems to me that this same principle was in operation in the land of Egypt. Joseph bought the land for Pharaoh, and he is enabling the people to live by furnishing them food. I think that Joseph stayed within the confines of the law of supply and demand.

And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth. And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.

When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not aught left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands:

Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate.

And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's [[Gen. 47:15-20](#)].

There is no doubt that the famine was a very terrible thing.

And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof [[Gen. 47:21](#)].

There was a great migration into the urban areas so that they would be near the center of supply where the grain was stored. You remember that Joseph had chosen these centers throughout Egypt at the very beginning. He now brings the people where they will be close to the supply of food.

Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones [[Gen. 47:23-24](#)].

Joseph knows that the famine will be ended the next year; so he tells the people to sow their grain.

And they said, Thou hast saved our lives; let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's [[Gen. 47:25-26](#)].

Joseph Promises Jacob Burial In Canaan (47:27-31)

And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight,

put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:

But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he said, I will do as thou hast said.

And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head [[Gen. 47:27-31](#)].

I think there are several factors which entered into Jacob's request to be buried back in the land of Canaan. First of all, he is now 147 years old, and he becomes alarmed that he will die in the land of Egypt. I think that is clear to him now. Then, the success of Joseph in acquiring all the land for Pharaoh makes him believe that his family might become comfortable in Egypt and never want to return to Canaan. His age certainly told him that he would die shortly.

We need to recognize this request as an evidence of the faith of Jacob in the covenant which God had made with his fathers. We need to note this because it will come up several times as we go through the Bible. The hope of the Old Testament is an earthly hope. Abraham believed that he would be raised from the dead in that land, so he wanted to be buried there. Isaac believed the same. Now Jacob is expressing that same faith. You see, the hope in the Old Testament is not to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and enter the city of the New Jerusalem, which is the eternal and permanent abode of the church.

The hope of the Old Testament is in Christ's Kingdom which will be set up on this earth. When that happens, Israel's great hope will be fulfilled, and these people will be raised for that Kingdom. The first thousand years of it will be a time of testing, and after that the eternal Kingdom will continue on and on. This is why Jacob does not want to be buried in Egypt. If he had no faith or hope in God's promise to him, what difference would it make where he was buried?

For believers today it makes no difference where we are buried. At the time of the Rapture, wherever we are, we shall be raised, and our bodies will join our spirits; that is, if we have died before the Rapture takes place. If we are still living, then we shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. So it won't make any difference if we are buried in Egypt or in Canaan or in Los Angeles, or in Timbuktu. The living "in Christ" and the dead "in Christ" in all of these places will be caught up. It won't make any difference where we are. We don't need to go to a launching pad in Florida and take off from there. No, our hope is a heavenly hope.

The hope of the Old Testament is an earthly hope, and the fact that Jacob wants to be buried back in the land is an evidence of his faith in the Resurrection. He hopes to be raised from the dead in the Promised Land. Jacob is now becoming a man of faith.

Chapter 48

THEME: Joseph visits Jacob during his last illness; Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh

This tells us of Jacob's last sickness and his blessing of the two sons of Joseph. We are told in [Hebrews 11:21](#) that "by faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

This chapter gives us another occasion to see further evidence of the spiritual growth of Jacob. He has come a long, long way since his early days. We may feel that it is unfortunate that these traits which appear in the last days of Jacob were not present in his early life. But isn't it wonderful to be able to observe in this that spiritual life is a growth and a development! It is not some sensational experience which takes place in a moment of time, but it is described scripturally as a walk in the Spirit. There was too much of the old nature in Jacob when he was a young man, and the new nature is not discerned until he is an old man.

A fine-looking couple in Memphis, Tennessee, had come forward after a service. I asked them what they came forward for. They said they wanted all that God had for them. I found out that they came forward every Sunday. They thought they would have some sensational, momentous experience that would all of a sudden make them fully grown Christians. Scripture tells us we are to ". . . grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" ([2Pet. 3:18](#)). We see in Jacob that we must wait for the fruit of the Spirit to develop. But thank God for the possibility of growth in our lives and for the patience of God which permits it. Also, we can thank Him that He doesn't move in, as we would, and try to force growth. God very patiently dealt with Jacob, and He will deal very patiently with you and me.

Joseph Visits Jacob During His Last Illness (48:1-4)

And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me [[Gen. 48:1-3](#)].

Can you imagine the thrill that fills the heart of this old man? Here comes Joseph, his favorite son, with his two young boys. Jacob never dreamed he would see Joseph again because he thought he had been killed. Yet he sees Joseph elevated to this important position in Egypt, and he can trace the way God had worked out the affairs of his life. Jacob had been in Egypt for 17 years now. He is an old man and is dying, but he musters his strength to sit at the edge of his bed. Notice that his thinking goes back to the time God appeared to him at Luz, and he says to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me." Jacob has come a long way. We see now the faith of Jacob. He is now trusting God. He is not bragging about himself. As a young man he was clever and could get what he wanted -- or so he thought -- and he would use any kind of method to get it. But now, as he looks back over his life, he remembers when God appeared to him at Bethel, both when he was leaving the land of Canaan and when he was returning. He says, "God appeared to me there, and God blessed me."

Now we see the faith of Jacob --

And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession [[Gen. 48:4](#)].

Let's pay special attention to God's promise that Jacob mentions, which runs through the Old and New Testaments. He made the promise to the line of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There are three specific points to the covenant: (1) the nation, (2) the land, and (3) the blessing. But the two important things for Jacob right here are these: (1) "I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people"; (2) "and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession."

The third part of the covenant is important for you and me. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The reason that you and I are sitting down with the Bible right now is because God has made good two-thirds of this promise which He covenanted thousands of years ago. The one-third is still not fulfilled. The Jews do not have the land of Israel yet. Oh, they have a little border of it, but it is certainly a bone of contention. When they get the land from the hand of God, they will live there in peace. Every man will be under his vine and his fig tree. They will own property and pay no taxes. That sounds like the Millennium, doesn't it? Well, that is what it will be.

Jacob Blesses Ephraim And Manasseh (48:5-22)

And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance [[Gen. 48:5-6](#)].

These two grandsons, the two sons of Joseph, will each become a tribe. One would conclude that there are thirteen tribes of Israel, since there are twelve sons, and now the two sons of Joseph are each to become a tribe. There was no tribe of Joseph, but there were the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and that makes thirteen in any man's mathematics. Yet the Bible counts twelve tribes. You see, the tribe of Levi was not counted as a tribe. They became the high priestly tribe and were not given any land or territory but were scattered as priests throughout the other tribes. So they were not counted as a tribe. You may consider that to be a rather devious way of counting, but I didn't do it; the Word of God counts it that way. That is the way God wanted it to be, and so that is the way God made it.

Ephraim and Manasseh are over 17 years old because they were born before Jacob came to Egypt. They each become a tribe.

Notice now that Jacob's mind goes back to Rachel, his beloved, the mother of Joseph.

And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Beth-lehem [[Gen. 48:7](#)].

My friend, when you and I sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem," we think of the birth of Jesus, but if Jacob could hear us, he would think primarily of the death of his beloved and beautiful Rachel. Here he is on his deathbed, and his thoughts go back to the place where he buried her. That was his heartbreak.

And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these?

And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them [[Gen. 48:8-9](#)].

Have you noticed that both Isaac and Jacob had trouble seeing when they got old? The brightness of the sun may have something to do with it. Even today there is a lot of eye disease in the Mideast countries. When I was in the Arab countries, I noticed a great many old people who seemed to have difficulty getting around. They weren't entirely blind, but they certainly couldn't see very well. So we notice here that Jacob didn't recognize the boys.

Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them and embraced them [[Gen. 48:10](#)].

Perhaps the fellows are a little embarrassed by their grandfather's show of affection for them.

And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth [[Gen. 48:11-12](#)].

It seems that the two boys tried to get away from their grandfather when he lavished his affection upon them.

And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him [[Gen. 48:13](#)].

Joseph is bringing the boys to their grandfather that he might bless them. The one who would stand before Israel at his right hand would be the one with priority.

And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn [[Gen. 48:14](#)].

Ephraim is to become the leader above Manasseh. Later on we will see that the tribe of Manasseh marched under the banner of the tribe of Ephraim in the wilderness march, as described in Numbers. Joshua came out of the tribe of Ephraim, by the way, and there

were many great men from that tribe. It became the tribe with priority -- there is no question about that.

Do you see what happened here? Even though Jacob couldn't see too well, he could tell what Joseph was doing. Joseph was pushing the older son to the position of Jacob's right hand and the younger son toward the left hand. So what did old Jacob do? Well, he just switched hands. He crossed his hands and put his right hand on the younger son.

Why did he do this? There is no doubt that he had tender affection for both boys. They were the sons of his favorite son Joseph. He knowingly gives the blessing to the younger, and I think one reason may have been that he was the younger and he had received the blessing. So he passes the blessing on to the younger son here.

This is an interesting principle that runs all the way through the Scriptures. For instance, in the choice of David, David was the youngest of the sons of Jesse. Why did God choose him? God is illustrating for you and me a great spiritual truth. God does not accept primogeniture -- that is, natural birth. Never will He accept it. There must be the new birth. Therefore, God does not pay attention to our customs. We say that the oldest boy has the responsibility in a family. Well, the oldest boy is not the one whom God always chooses. That is, God does not choose the natural man -- He chooses no man because of his natural ability. How we need to learn this truth in our day! Now don't misunderstand me. God can use talent, but it must be dedicated to Him! If it took talent alone to bring about revival, we would have had revival in California years ago. We have Christian talent all around, but we don't have revival. Why not? Because the talent is not dedicated to God. I tell you, my friend, it must be yielded to Him to be used of Him.

And old Jacob crossed his hands as he laid them on the heads of his grandsons so that he gave the younger boy the priority.

And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day [[Gen. 48:15](#)].

"The God which fed me all my life long unto this day." He reaches spiritual heights here, my friend.

The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth [[Gen. 48:16](#)].

"The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." He has nothing to boast about except a wonderful Redeemer. And they did "grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" just as he said.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Jacob said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head [[Gen. 48:17-19](#)].

Watch old Jacob's reaction --

And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations [[Gen. 48:19](#)].

"His seed shall become a multitude of nations" -- that's important to see.

Joseph had better accept this because he is not the oldest, either. He happens to be one of the youngest, and yet the blessing is given to his sons.

And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers [[Gen. 48:20-21](#)].

Notice Jacob's faith in God.

Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow [[Gen. 48:22](#)].

That is, Joseph, through his two sons, would have a greater inheritance than the other brothers would have.

This apparently was a personal gift made by Jacob to Joseph (see [John 4:5](#)). It was a ridge near Sychar where Joseph was buried. It compensated for the fact that two tribes came from Joseph and they needed more territory. It was a parcel of land which Jacob first bought from the Amorite, then later they retook it by force. Jacob returned the compliment, and by force he reclaimed it. It has been an area of controversy up to the present time. It is here that modern Israel wants to build on the West Bank.

Chapter 49

THEME: Jacob's deathbed blessing and prophecy; final words and death of Jacob

This is another remarkable chapter, as it is the deathbed scene of old Jacob. In fact, in the previous chapter we saw him on that deathbed as he strengthened himself, sat upon the bed, and blessed the sons of Joseph.

After that interview, the rest of Jacob's sons came in, so that around him now are all twelve of his sons. He has a farewell message for each of them. He begins with the eldest and goes right down the list. Anything that a man says on his deathbed is important because generally, if he ever tells the truth, he tells it on his deathbed. This deathbed message is dramatic because it is prophetic. It tells what will happen to the twelve sons of Jacob when they become tribes. What was prophetic then has now become largely historical.

This is our final opportunity to see another evidence of faith in the life of Jacob. He spoke to his boys who were to become the twelve tribes in the nation of Israel and would be

dwelling in the land of Canaan. What faith! Remember that the Canaanite was then in the land and that Jacob's family was favorably situated in Egypt.

Jacob's Deathbed Blessing And Prophecy (49:1-27)

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days [[Gen. 49:1](#)].

We come here to an important expression. We find that there are certain expressions which the Bible uses over and over again. One of those expressions is right here: "in the last days." The last days of the nation Israel will be different from the last days of the church. There is a very sharp dispensational distinction which needs to be made. Now he is talking about the last days of the nation Israel and what is going to happen then to the twelve tribes which will develop from his sons and will form the nation.

A friend of mine in seminary (a very intelligent young man who did a great deal of studying) wrote his thesis on the prophecies concerning the twelve sons of Jacob and the tribes that came from them. I enjoyed talking with him because he always had something new to offer. I came to appreciate at that time the marvelous fulfillment there has been of these prophecies to the tribes, especially those given by Moses in [Deuteronomy 33](#).

Many folk talk about the fact that certain prophecies concerning the nation Israel have been fulfilled, and that is true. But we can narrow it down further by dividing Israel into twelve parts and recognizing that God has had something to say concerning each of the twelve. Not only have His prophecies concerning the nation been fulfilled, but prophecies concerning each tribe have been fulfilled. My friend, that makes it remarkable indeed. In the chapter before us we will see the prophecies of what will befall each tribe in the "last days." While some of them have been fulfilled already, most of them wait final fulfillment. I will be hitting only the highlights, but if you want a more comprehensive study, I recommend two sources listed in the bibliography at the end of this book: Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis by Davis, and The Genesis Record by Morris.

Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father [[Gen. 49:2](#)].

Here now is the old man sitting up in bed. I've seen pictures of him stretched out in bed looking like he wouldn't be able to raise his head. But that is not true! He was leaning on his staff, as we learn in [Hebrews 11:21](#). Frankly, old Jacob had been on the go all of his life, and he wanted to keep going. Death is really an embarrassment. It comes at a most inconvenient time, a time when we want to keep going down here. (I have made appointments two years ahead, and I don't know whether I'll fulfill them or not. I accept them with one stipulation: "provided I'm alive.") Jacob found that he couldn't keep going. He was leaning on his staff. He wanted to keep going, but he couldn't. What a remarkable man he was in many ways.

Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch [[Gen. 49:3-4](#)].

These patriarchs recognized the great subject of heredity that is of so much concern today. Like father, like son. Jacob recognizes that and sees that this boy Reuben is a great deal like himself. "Unstable as water" could have described Jacob in his early years. It was true of his oldest son, also. "Thou shalt not excel." Reuben never did. He never did win a blue ribbon. He won a couple of red ribbons and some white ribbons, but he was never in first place.

There are a lot of folk like that today. They are satisfied and do not wish to excel. I have a preacher friend who is a wonderful man. He could have been an outstanding writer, but he didn't want to be. I think he wrote two little pamphlets. He could have been a great Bible teacher, but he didn't want to be. He just did what he wanted to do. He was satisfied with the red ribbon and never won a blue ribbon.

The story about Reuben which Jacob mentions here is a sordid story. I didn't dwell on it when we went through Genesis because I see no reason to dwell on that. Contemporary literature, plays, movies, and television give us enough of the sordid to make us sick of it. God does not intend for us to dwell on man's sins. In fact, He gives us these instructions: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" ([Phil. 4:8](#)). But God records human sins so that we may have an accurate picture of the human family.

The next two boys are classed together. They were full-brothers, sons of Leah.

Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations [[Gen. 49:5](#)].

You remember how they went to Shalem, a city of Shechem, and killed all the inhabitants of the city because one man was guilty of raping their own sister. They took their revenge on the whole town! They should not have done that, of course, and Jacob reminds them of this.

O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel [[Gen. 49:6-7](#)].

In Levi, we see an exhibition of the marvelous grace of God. It is true that they were scattered in Israel, but this was because they were made the priestly tribe. It was the grace of God that could take a cruel person like Levi and make him the head of the priestly tribe.

It is the grace of God that has transformed us sinners into a kingdom of priests, my friend. All believers are priests today. Among them are converted drunkards, converted harlots, converted murderers. I have had several of them in the churches where I have served. How did they become priests in the Kingdom of God? Just as we all did -- by the marvelous grace of God. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" ([1Pet. 1:18-19](#)). Then he goes on in [1Peter 2:5](#) to say, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Who is he talking about? Those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ!

Reuben lost first place, and Simeon and Levi have also lost first place. The king will not come from any of these tribes. There is another boy who was also a sinner. We will see what the grace of God did for him:

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee [[Gen. 49:8](#)].

"Thy father's children shall bow down before thee." Why? Because the Lord Jesus Christ came from the line of Judah, and it is before Him all will bow.

Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? [[Gen. 49:9](#)].

Here is one of the most remarkable prophecies of Scripture --

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be [[Gen. 49:10](#)].

"Until Shiloh come" -- Shiloh is the ruler.

This is one of the more remarkable prophecies in all the Word of God. Already we have been told that there will be a seed of the woman. That was the first prophecy of Christ: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" ([Gen. 3:15](#)). The "seed" of the woman is the One who will do the bruising of the serpent's head. He will be the One to get the victory. This first prophecy was in Genesis; then that Seed was confirmed to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Now it is confirmed to Judah -- out of Judah's line He is coming. Also, the word shiloh means "rest and tranquility." Christ is the One who will bring rest. Remember that when the Lord Jesus walked here on earth, He turned from those who had rejected Him, and He said to the populace, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will rest you" ([Matt. 11:28](#)). That is Shiloh -- Shiloh had come.

Not only is Christ Shiloh, but also He is the One who will hold the sceptre. The sceptre of this universe will be held in nail-pierced hands. In the last part of [verse 24](#) of this chapter we read that from God will come the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel. So this Shiloh is also

a shepherd and a stone. When we get to [Numbers 24:17](#) we will find that a Star is prophesied. Think of all that the coming of Christ means. He is the Seed promised to the woman and to the patriarchs. He is the Shiloh who brings rest. He is the King who holds the sceptre. He is the Shepherd who gave His life, and He is the Chief Shepherd who is coming someday. He is the Stone that the builders disallowed but who is now become the headstone of the corner. He is the Star, the bright and morning Star for His church. This is the line that went from Adam to Seth (after Abel was murdered). From Seth it went through Noah to Shem and to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and now to Judah. Friend, don't miss this wonderful fact that God is moving according to a pattern and a program here. This is very important for us to see.

Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk [[Gen. 49:11-12](#)].

Who is this talking about? It is Christ who came riding into Jerusalem on a little donkey, offering Himself as the Messiah, the King, and the Savior. "He washed his garments in wine" -- what kind of wine? Blood, His own blood. But when Christ comes the next time, His garments will be red. The question is asked, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winevat?" ([Isa. 63:2](#)). At this time it will not be His own blood but the blood of His enemies. This predicts Christ's second coming when He returns in judgment.

The prophecy given to Judah is one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Scriptures.

Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for a haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon [[Gen. 49:13](#)].

Zebulun was the tribe which lived along the coast up in the northern part of the land.

Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens:

And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute [[Gen. 49:14-15](#)].

Issachar was also finally located way up in the northern part of the land. They were the ones who did a great deal of the work that constituted the backbone of the nation. They were the workers, and that is the thought here. We hear a great deal about the silent majority today, that is, the average person like you and me. We don't get on television. It is the unusual, often the peculiar, people whom we see on television and whom people consider to be great. People try to convince us that these are the kind of folk who are the important people. But, my friend, they are not the backbone of this nation, or of any nation. The little tribes, like Zebulun and Issachar, which we tend to pass over were really the backbone of the nation Israel when they got settled in the Promised Land.

Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel.

Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD [[Gen. 49:16-18](#)].

Dan is going to need the salvation of the Lord because Dan will be one of the tribes which actually will lead in rebellion. We will see that when we get on in our study through Scripture.

Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last [[Gen. 49:19](#)].

This was another tribe that settled up in the northern part of the country. Actually, Dan was the most northern so that when the extent of the land of Israel is described, it is expressed as "from Dan to Beer-sheba."

Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words [[Gen. 49:20-21](#)].

As I mentioned earlier, a fellow student in seminary wrote his thesis on the fulfillment of each of these prophecies concerning the twelve sons of Jacob. I have not made a personal study of this, but if you are a student, you would find such a research very rewarding. Throughout the remainder of the Bible, every person with whom it deals personally comes from one of the tribes of Israel.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall [[Gen. 49:22](#)].

Joseph had left the land of Canaan and had gone down into Egypt, but he was still a witness for God there. Later, his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, would be put in the territory which was Samaria later in history. That was called gentile territory in Christ's day. It was a great place to witness, and the gospel did go into that area. Our Lord Himself ministered there. In [John 4](#) we have the record of His witness to the Samaritan people, beginning with a woman at a well.

The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:

But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb [[Gen. 49:23-25](#)].

The two tribes that came from Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh became very prominent and important tribes -- so much so that out of them came the divisions of the kingdom. They were that powerful.

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren [[Gen. 49:26](#)].

Note that Jacob is trying to tie Joseph, and the two tribes which will come from him, back to the God of Israel, the Creator, the Redeemer. Why? Well, these tribes, especially Ephraim, led Israel into idolatry. Jeroboam, who led in the rebellion and placed the two golden calves at Israel's borders, came from the tribe of Ephraim. So here on his deathbed, Jacob calls them back, back to the God of his father.

Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil [[Gen. 49:27](#)].

This is a strange prophecy concerning Benjamin. Benjamin was closely identified with Judah, so much so that Benjamin went with the tribe of Judah at the division of the kingdom. The tribe of Benjamin was the only one that stayed with the house of David.

Final Words And Death Of Jacob (49:29-33)

And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite [[Gen. 49:29](#)].

We see that death to Jacob was not the end of it all. He was going to be with his people. He wanted his body to be buried in the cave that Abraham had bought and paid for. He wanted to make sure that he stayed in that land until the day when he would be raised from the dead to live in that land.

In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace [[Gen. 49:30](#)].

We can see how much this man knew of his own family history. I don't imagine that he was carrying with him a written record at this time, yet he carried this information in his mind.

There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah [[Gen. 49:31](#)].

It is not so much that he was interested in being buried by Leah (after all, Rachel was buried up in Bethlehem), but he wants to be buried where he will be raised from the dead at the Resurrection so he will be right there when God fulfills His promises to the nation Israel.

The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth.

And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people [[Gen. 49:32-33](#)].

It is interesting to see that up to the very last Jacob kept his feet on the floor. He started out in life as a man of the flesh. He took hold of his brother's heel at birth which was why he was called Jacob, "the supplanter." He lived up to that name which was certainly characteristic of him. He held on to everything that he could find, and he was always trying to be first. He started out on all fours, and he took what he wanted by any method. As a young man he walked on his own two feet in his own strength and ability. He depended on his own cleverness and ingenuity. He thought he could take care of himself and did not need God. He was self-sufficient, self-opinionated, self-assertive, aggressive, contemptible, and despicable.

At Peniel God crippled him. God had to "break" him to get him, and I think God was prepared to break his neck! After that, he went through life limping. He had to go on three legs, using a staff or walking stick, because he could no longer walk by himself. Here, before his death, he is sitting on the bed, leaning on his staff. Now the time has come. He pulls his feet up into the bed, puts down the staff, and lies down to die. This is Jacob. He has walked a long way through life. He ends in a final act of faith, looking forward to the day when he will be raised from the dead in the land, according to the promise of God.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" ([Heb. 11:13](#)).

Chapter 50

THEME: Burial of Jacob in Canaan; Joseph allays the fears of his brethren; death and burial of Joseph in Egypt

This chapter tells of the burial of Jacob in Canaan and the death and burial of Joseph in Egypt. There is, therefore, a touch of sadness about this last chapter of Genesis. We have already called attention to the emphasis put upon death in the Book of Genesis. God had told Adam, ". . . For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" ([Gen. 2:17](#)). Paul wrote later, ". . . so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" ([Rom. 5:12](#)). The Book of Genesis is a full example of the fact of sin and the reality of death. It opens with God and man in the Garden of Eden and ends in a coffin in Egypt. This book recounts the entrance of sin into the human family but also relates the faithfulness of God in providing a way of life for man.

Burial Of Jacob In Canaan (50:1-13)

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him [[Gen. 50:1](#)].

Naturally, he sorrowed. He loved his father.

And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel [[Gen. 50:2](#)].

We know that the Egyptians were quite expert at this sort of thing. We hear of the mummies of Egypt. They had a method of preserving bodies that we have not learned yet

today. So Joseph called in the physicians to embalm his father. We don't laugh at a funeral, but I can't help but smile when I think of their making old Jacob up into a mummy, and I am of the opinion that his mummy is in Hebron today.

Remember, it had been his request to be taken and buried in the cave of Machpelah because his hope was an earthly hope. When he is raised from the dead, he will be there in the land with the nation Israel. The hope of the believer today, the member of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to be caught up with the Lord in the air and to go to a place called the New Jerusalem out in space. There are two different hopes, and they are both glorious.

And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days [[Gen. 50:3](#)].

It took them forty days to embalm. Evidently there are several processes involved. And we note that the Egyptians mourned for him. I don't think this was professional mourning. I think he had become a real saint in the land of Egypt and was probably respected as the father of Joseph. Joseph was the deliverer, but I believe that his father Jacob was at this time a real saint of God.

And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt [[Gen. 50:4-7](#)].

You can see how this man was greatly respected, loved, and honored in the land of Egypt. This is probably the longest funeral procession that the world has ever seen. It went all the way from Egypt to Hebron in Canaan.

And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen [[Gen. 50:8](#)].

One wonders whether Pharaoh required that they leave their little ones and their flocks so that he could be sure they would come back. Pharaoh didn't want to lose Joseph because he still needed him.

And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.

And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan.

And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them:

For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre [[Gen. 50:9-13](#)].

You may wonder why Jacob wasn't buried with Rachel in Bethlehem, which was probably not more than twenty miles farther north. I think the reason is stated here. Abraham had bought this cave, and Jacob wanted to be buried with his fathers in a place that was bought and paid for to make sure that he would stay in the land. So he was buried with the other patriarchs. They all had the same hope of resurrection.

Joseph Allays The Fears Of His Brethren (50:14-23)

And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sins; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him [[Gen. 50:14-17](#)].

Evidently the brothers had gone to Jacob before he died and had expressed their fears regarding what would happen to them after he was gone. They were afraid that Joseph would turn on them and be against them once the father was gone. So Jacob had given them a message to tell to Joseph, and he was sure that Joseph would not persecute them to attempt to get even with them. When the brothers do come to Joseph with this confession, Joseph breaks into weeping because of it. Now they are repenting because of their sin.

And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants [[Gen. 50:18](#)].

You see, the prophecy of their falling down before him has repeatedly come true.

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? [[Gen. 50:19](#)].

Joseph gives God the glory in every case.

Now here is a remarkable verse of Scripture --

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive [[Gen. 50:20](#)].

Friend, God has a far-off purpose that you and I do not see. I must confess how human I am about this because I can't see any further than my nose when trouble comes to me, and I ask, "Why does God permit this to happen?" We need to remember that He has a good purpose in view. He is not going to let anything happen to you unless it will accomplish a good purpose in your life.

Now listen to Joseph --

Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees [[Gen. 50:21-23](#)].

I take this to mean that Joseph was a great-great-grandfather.

Death And Burial Of Joseph In Egypt (50:24-26)

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt [[Gen. 50:24-26](#)].

This is the way the Book of Genesis ends. It began with God creating the heaven and the earth, and it ends with a coffin in Egypt. What had happened to the human family? Sin had intruded into the creation of God.

Why was not Joseph taken up to Canaan and buried there at this time? I think it is obvious that Joseph was a hero in the land of Egypt and his family would not have been permitted to remove his body from Egypt at that time. I think he was one of the outstanding patriots whom the Egyptians revered. Probably they had a monument raised at his grave.

But Joseph says to his own people, "When you go back to Canaan, don't leave my bones down here!" In Joseph we see the same hope that we saw in Jacob; that is, a confidence that God would give them the land of Canaan as an eternal possession. And they wanted

to be raised from the dead in their own land. Joseph believed that God would raise up His earthly people to inherit the land of promise.

The Book of Hebrews mentions this as the crowning act of faith in the life of Joseph. "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones" ([Heb. 11:22](#)).

In [Exodus 13](#) we will see how wonderfully God honored Joseph and answered his request. Moses and the children of Israel took the bones of Joseph with them when they left Egypt.

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